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# THE DUBLIN MAGAZINE

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## SISTER EUCHARIA

*A Play in Three Scenes*

*By Austin Clarke*

### CHARACTERS :

SISTER GABRIEL  
SISTER STANISLAUS  
SISTER AGNES  
SISTER JEROME  
LAY SISTER  
SISTER ANGELICA  
REVEREND MOTHER

FATHER SHERIDAN  
SISTER EUCHARIA  
FIRST SPEAKER  
SECOND SPEAKER  
SISTERS OF THE COMMUNITY  
SOULS OF SISTERS IN PURGATORY

### SCENE I.

PLACE : A Convent Interior.

TIME : The Present.

*As the curtain rises the stage is in semi-darkness, but through the lofty central doorway, at back, light is shining from the corridor which leads on left to the Chapel. The scene is represented by curtains and this central doorway is approached by a few steps. There are entrances right and left of front stage. After a few moments a nun enters from right, front stage. She crosses stage swiftly, silently and goes up steps. She remains at side of doorway looking along the corridor towards chapel in a listening attitude. As she does so, other nuns come in quietly left and right front. They range themselves on each side of the stage. Stage-light gradually increases as they do so until it is normal. The stage is seen to be quite bare except for two high hall chairs, one on each side of the central steps. All the nuns are in white or cream habits. They all lean forward listening, but they are obviously restless and unable to remain still. They form a chorus but as the chorus is within and, therefore, part of the action, they are not grouped too formally. In the intense*

*silence we are aware of a general nervous tension and in the scene which follows the sisters speak at first on a clear yet subdued note of excitement, as if with each syllable they broke the rule of silence.*

SISTER (*before coming down steps*) : Sister Eucharistia is praying  
Still.

CHORUS OF SISTERS (*left and right*) (*alternately*) : Praying  
Praying

All night

All day

She is praying still.

Yes, praying, praying still.

SISTER GABRIEL : (*coming forward*) O God look down  
On us ! What can we do ? What can we do  
This night ? She will not leave the chapel, when  
We touch her hand and whisper it is time  
To go.

CHORUS : (*left and right*) She will not stir.  
She will not leave  
When we have touched her sleeve  
And whispered : ' it  
Is time to go.'

Day after day

It is the same.

SISTER GABRIEL : Day after day—the same.

CHORUS : She trembles at the sound of every bell  
As though she served at Mass—

and was afraid

Of the responses we know by heart.

SISTER GABRIEL : At half-past four, at half-past four,  
As I was standing in the corridor,  
I heard her cry out from the altar rail  
In an agony beyond all human help  
And yet the day she was professed, a year  
Ago, I saw, I saw her face  
Before the Bishop hid it from the world  
Forever . .

CHORUS : Tell us. Tell us

What did you see ?

What did you see in her face ?



## 3

CHORUS :            Yes.    Yes.

(While she is speaking, Sister Agnes and Sister Stanislaus enter. Both are obviously senior nuns).

SISTER AGNES :                 You forget yourself  
Now, Sister Gabriel,

I dreamed  
Last night the convent had been decorated  
Again. As I leaned across the bannister  
The walls were mirroring the white paint  
And in every room, every passage of the house,  
Electric light was wasting by itself

So that I thought the workmen had gone home  
And left the bright enamelling . . . But I  
Could hear somewhere, stripping behind a panel,  
The dull roar of a spirit lamp.

SISTER STANISLAUS : (*impatiently*) Yes. Yes.

THE SISTER : Then all was different . . .

For we were waiting in this very place,  
The bell for prayers began to ring, each light  
Became a glowing wire and, like a statue,  
Sister Eucharia was standing there  
Alone.

(*pointing to the central doorway*)  
Three candles guttered from the iron heart  
Below that shrine . . .

O then I saw her shake,  
I heard her moaning—and may God forgive me  
For saying what is on my tongue—  
But in that dream, I thought, I thought  
That she had made a bad communion.

(*a murmur of consternation*)

SISTER GABRIEL : Something  
Was on the tip of my tongue too, all day,  
Something I dared not tell to anyone  
Until this very minute.

CHORUS : What is it ?

SISTER GABRIEL : Only a night ago  
I met her on the stairs just as the clock  
Was striking in the hall below. She swayed . . .  
I caught her arm and . . . Sisters . . . It was not  
A human arm.

SISTER STANISLAUS : Now, Sister Gabriel  
That is sufficient.

SISTER GABRIEL : I tell you it was  
No human arm  
(*slowly*) . . . so stiff . . . so hard . . . so cold.  
All lumps and knobs in her half-empty sleeve.  
I thought of a door knocker hidden in crêpe  
And then I thought that I had put my hand  
Within the railings of a vault,



[illegible]

SISTER GABRIEL : I tell you it is true  
And something horrible is going to happen  
To her, because we are afraid. I say  
Again that she should be anointed.

CHORUS: Yes. Sister Gabriel is right. Yes

We are  
Afraid. We are afraid of what is going  
To happen here this night.

SISTER AGNES: (*aside*) The house is out  
Of hand. O what are we to do now?

SISTER STANISLAUS :                                  Send  
For Reverend Mother.

(Sister Jerome enters. She is aged and walks slowly).

SISTER AGNES : Here is Sister Jerome.

SISTER STANISLAUS: Thank God for that.

SISTER AGNES: (to Sister Jerome) O Sister, What are we  
To do?

We should be in the chapel now.

CHORUS : Yes, yes.  
We should be in the chapel.

SISTER JEROME: (*looking towards central doorway and nodding*) Is she  
The same?

SISTER AGNES: SISTER STANISLAUS: (*together*)  
Yes, she is praying, praying  
Still.

CHORUS: Praying, praying. All night  
All day.

She is praying, praying still.

SISTER JEROME: What is the time, please, Sister Agnes?

SISTER AGNES : (*taking watch from pocket in habit concealed by cape*)  
To eight, Five



# SISTER EUCHARIA

7

SISTER JEROME :            This is disgraceful.    In my day  
                                  The young were always humble at their prayers  
                                  And silent at the stations of the cross  
                                  As if they heard the sighing of poor souls  
                                  In Purgatory ; and we never knew  
                                  How many times they did the sorrowful round  
                                  Morning or evening, but this nun, whose name  
                                  I have forgotten . .

SISTER STANISLAUS : (*prompting*)                                   Sister Eucharia—

SISTER JEROME : (*ignoring*) . . This nun has turned her back upon  
    the lesson

                                 We learn and made the holy offices  
                                  Her own.

SISTER AGNES :                                   Reverend Mother thinks  
                                  It is the will of God.

SISTER STANISLAUS :                                   No, Sister is right.  
                                  The sacred name is loud upon her lips,  
                                  She kneels in dread of the Eternal Fire  
                                  And ends the world upon a cry.    Indeed  
                                  The convent has been scandalised.

SISTER AGNES :     I feel  
                                  Ashamed as if at every sob she took  
                                  A ladder from the cross and our own prayers  
                                  Were not enough.

SISTER GABRIEL : (*joining in*)                                   That is uncharitable.

SISTER JEROME : Order and discipline must be restored  
                                  At once.

                                 (*turning, as lay sister enters, right, front*)  
                                  Who's that ?

CHORUS :                                   Here is the little lay sister !  
                                  The little lay sister !

                                 (*single voices rise, but we cannot tell who is speaking, as the sisters  
                                  are thinking aloud*).

                                 What can she want ?  
                                  Her nose is very red.

                                 She has a cold  
                                  Again.

                                 And she's been crying in  
                                  The kitchen.

LAY SISTER : *(she is dressed in a grey habit and wears a small check apron. She hesitates between Sister Agnes and Sister Stanislaus).*

Sister, am I to ring the bell ?

SISTER AGNES : *(kindly)* We don't know.

Reverend Mother is not here.

LAY SISTER : O sister, I forgot to do it to-day—

To ring the Angelus, I mean.

And Reverend Mother was to send for me

But it was not my fault.

No. No . .

I couldn't help it, I couldn't help it.

All

This dreadful day of accidents, the cooking

Has been upset, the damper will not work,

The sink is choked . . Sister Eucharía

Has eaten nothing for two days . .

I burst out crying every time I see

Her plate.

SISTER AGNES : We are all troubled, Sister.

LAY SISTER : Oh ! It is terrible.

*(weeps)*

SISTER AGNES :

There, do not cry.

Reverend Mother is not vexed with you.

SISTER JEROME : She should control herself.

LAY SISTER *(confused)* :

I'm sorry, Mother.

*(lay sister hesitates at exit and comes back timidly).*

And the bell ? . . am I to ring the bell for prayers ?

SISTER AGNES : SISTER STANISLAUS :

No. No. Reverend Mother must decide

That question.

*(lay sister bows and hurries out).*

SISTER JEROME : It is disgraceful. In fifty years

I have never known the like. What is the name

Of the young nun who keeps us waiting here ?

SISTER STANISLAUS : Sister Eucharía.

SISTER JEROME :

In my opinion . .

*(She lowers her voice and the conversation with Sisters Agnes and Stanislaus is heard as a murmur, accompanied by much shaking of the three heads).*

## 9

(The words of the Chorus become a mere sibilance. Suddenly Sister Angelica, who has been standing by herself at the extreme right in increasing agitation, steps forward).



SISTER ANGELICA : (*addressing all*)

Come, come into the chapel now  
And pray with her.

Are you afraid because  
She tries to stay in daily adoration  
And her sweet breath lingers in every word  
Or sigh, when she has given up her soul  
To God.

Recital of a single prayer,  
Appointed both for the living and the dead,  
Can save us from the pains of Purgatory  
Through seven years and seven quarantines.  
Come, then and pray.

SISTER JEROME :

This, this

Is spreading quicker than a common cold,  
A cough that tickles every throat in church  
Before the Gospel has been read. It is  
Ridiculous and order must be kept  
Here.

SISTER ANGELICA : (*turning to her*)

Rules and regulations, Sister Jerome.

(*as if by rote*)

Get up at six o'clock  
And go to bed at ten  
An hour for meditation  
An hour for recreation  
Dead silence in the house  
When all the lights are out.

SISTER STANISLAUS : Have you no shame,  
Sister Angelica ?

SISTER AGNES :

This quarrelling !

This quarrelling !

SISTER ANGELICA : (*turning towards central doorway with outstretched hands*)

Sister Eucharistia,

Our sister in religion, pray for us  
Because we do not understand. I know  
That they are wrong. I know you are a saint.

## SISTER EUCHARIA

II

SISTER JEROME : (*grimly*) A saint !

CHORUS : (*in wonder*) A saint !

Ssssh !

Here is Reverend Mother,

Reverend Mother !

(*Reverend Mother enters*)

REV. MOTHER : What does this disturbance  
Mean ?

(*a few sisters lead Sister Angelica back to her place*).

A SISTER : (*aside*) Nothing, Reverend Mother, nothing. Sister

Has spoken just a little sharply. Her nerves  
Are all on edge.

SISTER JEROME : (*grimly*) What are we to do now ?

REV. MOTHER : I sent for Father Sheridan.  
He should be here at any minute.

SISTER JEROME : You should have sent for him before.

REV. MOTHER : I know. I made a great mistake.

SISTER JEROME : I warned you what would happen.

SISTER AGNES : (*shocked to Sister Jerome*)  
Sister, you  
Forget yourself.

REV. MOTHER : No, she is right. It was my fault.

SISTER JEROME : Moreover, everyone is saying  
You gave this young nun special privileges,  
The key of your own bookcase, holy leaflets  
And she had too much time  
On her hands.

REV. MOTHER : (*dreamily as if she were speaking to herself*)  
Ah Sister, it is hard to hold

The difference in mind, when we ourselves  
Were young and every book was edged with gold,  
How at the stroke of every bell, we sighed  
All in a tremble at the chapel door  
As if it were the first time or the last  
In life, how in the year we were professed  
We never heard the sound of our own footstep,

We clasped the silence in the corridor,  
We did not raise our eyes . .

(*she pauses*)

but when  
At evening time the beeswax on the floor  
Became too bright, we knew the sun was shining  
Between the sashes. Month by month we paced  
The corridor and it was best to tell  
The season by the flowers upon the altar! . . .  
But sometimes when I sit, with pen  
In hand before my writing desk, busy  
With bills, accounts and printed forms, I think  
Of that.

God knows if I am wholly to blame  
Because I thought this child, so serious  
Beyond her years, so pure in every act  
Of love, might teach a lesson to us all.

SISTER JEROME : (*bluntly*) Well, now you know the truth.

SISTER ANGELICA : (*coming forward*) O Mother, let  
Me speak.

Sister Eucharica is wise  
For her soul is sighing in the hands of God  
All day.

REV. MOTHER : (*thoughtfully*) If she were right.

SISTER JEROME : Right! Right!  
This house  
Has been distracted. Order and discipline  
Must be restored.

SISTER ANGELICA : O Mother, hear me.

REV. MOTHER : I cannot  
Now.

Sister Jerome is looking down  
The years.

SISTER ANGELICA : But, Mother—

REV. MOTHER : Silence, Sister  
Angelica!

SISTER JEROME : This, this  
Is spreading like a common cold, a cough  
Behind the hand . . .



A SISTER : I hear the hall door bell.

CHORUS : The hall door bell !

REV. MOTHER : Pray, it is Father Sheridan  
At last.

LAY SISTER : (*entering excitedly*) Reverend Mother !

REV. MOTHER : Who is it ?

LAY SISTER : Father Sheridan and he says . .

REV. MOTHER : Where is he ?

LAY SISTER : In the parlour.

REV. MOTHER : I'll come and speak to him.

(*changing her mind*)

No. No. I'll see him here.

(*She calls Sister Agnes, and gives her instructions. Sister Agnes goes out followed by the lay sister*).

REV. MOTHER : You may all leave now, Sisters.

(*The nuns are in a flutter of excitement, but they leave quietly, left, right.*

*Enter Sister Agnes and Father Sheridan. The latter is tall, handsome and of refined appearance. He is a city priest and his black clerical clothes are excellently cut, so that he has the general air of being well turned out. He still carries his tall hat and gloves, which Sister Agnes takes with great respect. She leaves, bearing the precious objects with great care*).

FATHER SHERIDAN : I got your letter, Reverend Mother, only a quarter of an hour ago.

REV. MOTHER : It was good of you to come here at once, Father.

FR. SHERIDAN : (*in a low tone*) This seems serious.

REV. MOTHER : We do not know what to think, Father. It has all happened so strangely, so suddenly.

FR. SHERIDAN : Where is she now ?

REV. MOTHER : In the chapel.

FR. SHERIDAN : Has she been there long ?

REV. MOTHER : All day.

FR. SHERIDAN : Well, Well !

REV. MOTHER : What do you think of it, Father ?

FR. SHERIDAN : I cannot say as yet. In such a case we must consider everything very carefully.

REV. MOTHER : Nothing like this has ever happened in the convent before.

FR. SHERIDAN : It's most unusual, certainly. But I have known such cases. We have to be very careful, however. We must not be misled by mere delusions and the folly of self indulgence. The Church warns us in such cases that . . .

REV. MOTHER : *(almost in a whisper)* Father.

FR. SHERIDAN : What is it ?

REV. MOTHER : I think I hear her. *(She goes over to steps)*  
Yes. *(Cautiously)* She has left the chapel. She moves as if she were in a trance. She is coming this way.  
*(Leaves steps)* What are we to do ?

FR. SHERIDAN : I'll talk to her.

REV. MOTHER : But if she is in this strange kind of trance—

FR. SHERIDAN : Yes, yes. You are quite right, Reverend Mother.  
We must be cautious. I'll observe her first, and see what she does.

REV. MOTHER : Shall I stay here, Father ?

FR. SHERIDAN : No. It would be best if I were alone. But remain within call. I'll step in here and watch her first.

*(Reverend Mother goes out left. Father Sheridan goes to right exit and stands within doorway so that he is not seen. The stage gradually darkens and for a few moments there is a complete black-out).*

## SCENE II.

*The action is continuous and the stage is in darkness, but we are aware of some change in the setting which indicates that the scene is beyond time and place. For a curtain has been drawn across the central doorway and gradually we see Sister Eucharía standing in light on the steps. In front, obscurely seen in a greyish light are the two Speakers, dressed in conventual robes and with heavy hoods. Their words are slow and significant).*

BOTH SPEAKERS : Sister Eucharía !

Sister

Eucharía !

FIRST SPEAKER :               Why do you hesitate  
                          Again?   Are you afraid to-night?

SECOND SPEAKER :                               Are you  
                          Afraid, Sister Eucharía?

*(Pause)*

BOTH SPEAKERS :                               Pray, pray  
                          For your own soul

FIRST SPEAKER : *(softly)*                       Before it is too late.  
*(Sister Eucharía has remained motionless but now raises her head).*

SISTER EUCHARIA : Too late?

BOTH SPEAKERS :               Too late.

SISTER EUCHARIA :                       Poor souls in Purgatory  
                          Why are you calling me again? Have I  
                          Not prayed for you? Have I not offered up  
                          My own intentions for your sake at Mass?  
                          Why do you come at such a time?  
                          *(She waits but there is no reply).*

  Morning,  
Though dark, delights the living and the dead  
When angels cluster in a great cathedral;  
O had we their faculties, who wait from day  
To day for that half-hour, we too might share  
In seven Masses at one time, be fast  
Or slow, bow down before the Elevation  
At the high altar, kneel where the pillars  
Have catacombed the glitter of a shrine,  
Follow the Gospel, changing place  
On the side altars, glorify the end  
In the beginning of the Sacrifice.

FIRST SPEAKER : Pray, pray to-night for you will never see  
                          The morning.

SECOND SPEAKER :                               Pray for your own soul.



SISTER EUCHARIA :

No ! No !

Not that familiar fear to catch my breath  
 With cold. I have too much to do  
 For my own soul. (*to herself*)

How many moments I  
 Have lost each day in idle breath that might  
 Have been the sum of holy aspiration.  
 Only the saints who stand before all time  
 Can know the total, see tremendous days  
 Of faith and mercy going down with flame  
 And coffin to the dark.

FIRST SPEAKER : (*urgently*)  
 Are mortal fears.

These, these

SECOND SPEAKER :  
 Before it is too late.

Pray, pray for your own soul

SISTER EUCHARIA : (*pleadingly*)  
 I am not worthy to obey the Son  
 Of Man.

Not yet. Not yet.

FIRST SPEAKER : His love is young as your own soul.

SISTER EUCHARIA : (*softly*) As young ?

SECOND SPEAKER : Yet He has suffered on this earth  
 Two thousand years.

FIRST SPEAKER : In every violent act  
 Of men, and cities that, in changing, build,  
 Unbuild, His word.

SISTER EUCHARIA : (*half to herself*) Two thousand years . . .  
 And yet poor fast can bring me to my knees  
 Though not in prayer, and a pain in my back  
 Unstay me. Fear, fear, not faith still holds me down  
 With iron arm and pincer, heats the pitch  
 Of frenzy, strips me for the martyrdom  
 Of shame. The saints are their own example  
 And when we die in thought, the senses are  
 Our executioners.

FIRST SPEAKER : Let the dead speak.

*(We have gradually become aware of the presence of others, the souls of the sisters in Purgatory. They are grouped left and right and some of those who speak singly are in a kneeling attitude below the central figure of Sister Eucharist. They divide the words among each other as if they were desirous of expressing the mystical unity of their painful, yet joyful existence in Purgatory. They are lit from below so that their up-raised hands and sleeves move in and out of that silver radiance).*

# SISTER EUCHARIA

17

BOTH SPEAKERS : (*alternatively*) Sisters of this convent,  
 twenty, thirty  
 A hundred years ago.

Were you afraid ?

CHORUS OF SOULS : We were afraid.

BOTH SPEAKERS : And did you fail ?

CHORUS OF SOULS : We failed.

BOTH SPEAKERS : Are you in pain ?

CHORUS OF SOULS : We are in pain.

SISTER EUCHARIA : O they  
 Are joyful in their pain.

CHORUS : (*left*) Yes, we  
 Are joyful in the flame of Purgatory,

CHORUS : (*right*) And feel in every pang the striking love  
 Of God.

SINGLE VOICES : (*alternatively*) I was so timid in my life  
 I did not hear the little cough that killed me.  
 But I am brave now, I am brave.

I was

So happy, so contented that I never knew a pain  
 In all my time on earth.

My hands

Are memory, but they are burning holes  
 Shaped by the nails—

That pierce my hands—

That break

My feet.

Ah ! I am wounded in the side.

I share the blood and water.

I am saved

By incorruption of that holy matter.

My soul is purified by flame.

I am

Halfway to Heaven in my pain.

One speck,

One speck of venial sin—

Too small, too small,

To stay the inquisition of a scruple,

Can keep the soul impure.

CHORUS : But we begin  
 Our gleaming for the heaven-set jewels, the rings  
 That shone upon the fingers of the great  
 Dominican will fit at last our humble  
 Love.

*(receding)*

Yes, we are joyful in the flame  
 Of Purgatory..

SISTER EUCHARIA : O do not leave me, blessed souls. I am  
 Afraid no longer. Let this be my last fault  
 On earth to be impatient for that love  
 And pain. O tell me, tell me what I am  
 To do.

*(Only the speakers are now seen).*

BOTH SPEAKERS : Gain absolution for the sins  
 Of your whole life.

*(The speakers vanish and Sister Eucharista is seen alone in an attitude of trance. Voices of sisters far-off : Sister Eucharista ! Voice of Priest off stage : Sister Eucharista !)*

### SCENE III.

*(The action is continuous and the scene is the same as Scene I. The light gradually rises to normal as Fr. Sheridan steps forward from right).*

FATHER SHERIDAN : *(firmly)* Sister Eucharista.

SISTER EUCHARIA : *(suddenly seeing him)*

Father !

*(she comes down steps)*

God

Has sent you here to-night. I want to make  
 A general confession.

FATHER SHERIDAN : That is an unusual request, Sister. Didn't  
 you make one last year before you took the veil ?  
 Is anything troubling your mind ? You know, of  
 course, that a general confession is only for a very great  
 occasion.

SISTER EUCHARIA : *(softly)* This is a great occasion.



FATHER SHERIDAN : Something has been on your mind, Sister, something, perhaps, you would like to discuss with me first . . .

Try to concentrate  
And tell me as your spiritual director.

SISTER EUCHARIA : I am dying, Father, I am dying.  
But O because I have prayed incessantly  
For all poor mortals lying at death's door,  
Absolve my sins, and then remember me  
In your own prayers. When you ascend  
The altar steps and all the congregation kneels  
And after the first Gospel, remember me.

FATHER SHERIDAN : (*kindly*) Come, my child. Your mind is disturbed. You are upset. You have been under some terrible strain. You need rest and sleep . . .

All, all of us must wait our time  
Until God calls us to Himself.

SISTER EUCHARIA : I have  
Been called.

FATHER SHERIDAN : (*firmly*) We must beware  
Of spiritual despair.

SISTER EUCHARIA : I have been called.

FATHER SHERIDAN : What do you mean ?

SISTER EUCHARIA : They have told me so.  
They have told me so to-night.

FATHER SHERIDAN : What do you mean ? Who told you so ?

SISTER EUCHARIA : The voices.

FATHER SHERIDAN : What voices are you speaking of ?

SISTER EUCHARIA : Voices  
That are in Purgatory.

FATHER SHERIDAN : (*startled*) But Sister  
Eucharist . .

SISTER EUCHARIA : (*rapidly*) Believe me, O believe me  
Is not each sacrament an outward sign,  
Visible action, plain to all the senses  
And yet divided from them by the meaning ? . . .

FATHER SHERIDAN : (*interrupting her*) Yes, yes, but what about  
those voices,  
Those voices you were speaking of ?

SISTER EUCHARIA : Father,  
 Can you not say two Masses on a Sunday  
 And three on All Souls' Day, renew the fast,  
 The miracle . . and are you not ordained  
 To move at day in mysteries of joy  
 And pain that the poor napkin, we  
 Embroider in our awe, can hide upon  
 The altar ?

*(She comes forward rapt)*

I see, I see the impassioned cope !  
 O shoulder thrust into the tabernacle  
 At evening time to put God from our reach  
 And strengthen faith again !

*(She turns to him and sees his hand, half-raised in protest, as it catches the light. She points to it).*

Believe me, O  
 Believe me by this hand that can bestow  
 Our daily blessing, by this mortal hand  
 That touched the Sacred Body in the tomb  
 To-day.

FATHER SHERIDAN : *(withdrawing)* Sister, Sister.

SISTER EUCHARIA : *(suddenly kneeling at his feet. Stage gradually darkens around them so that all light is focussed on the two figures).*

Bless me, Father,  
 For I have sinned.

FATHER SHERIDAN : Sister, Sister, listen to me.  
 This is most irregular.  
 This is not the place for confession.

SISTER EUCHARIA : *(unheeding)* Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, beatae  
*Mariae semper*  
*Virgini, beato Michaeli Archangelo, beato*  
*Joanni Baptistae, sanctis Apostolis Petro et*  
*Paulo, omnibus sanctis, . . .*

*(her voice sinks to a murmur, but rises again as she strikes her breast three times).*

*mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.*

FATHER SHERIDAN : You are overwrought, Sister, Your mind  
 is disturbed,

SISTER EUCHARIA : The sins of all my life come back to me.  
When I was in the world a looking-glass  
Could keep me late for Mass.  
A holy picture in a book  
Distract me and still, still my mind  
Is inattentive.

FATHER SHERIDAN : I cannot listen.  
I cannot now.

SISTER EUCHARIA : I have been disobedient,  
Indifferent, divided by three doubts,  
Unveiled, vocationless, in dreadful dreams.

FATHER SHERIDAN : I cannot give you absolution now.

SISTER EUCHARIA : O let me not be lost.  
I repent, I repent  
With all my heart and soul  
Of mortal sins.  
O let me not be lost.

FATHER SHERIDAN : Sister. You misunderstand me. You must  
try to be calm and control yourself. A solemn occasion  
requires proper preparation.

SISTER EUCHARIA : I repent, I repent.

FATHER SHERIDAN : To-morrow, perhaps, when you have examined  
your conscience more quietly, I will come here specially  
to hear your confession in the chapel and give you  
absolution.

SISTER EUCHARIA : (*faintly*) Too late. Too late. (*Falls at his  
feet*)

FATHER SHERIDAN : (*Alarmed*) Reverend Mother, Reverend  
Mother ! Come quickly !

(*Reverend Mother hurries in followed by Sisters. They bend over  
the prostrate figure of Sister Eucharist, who is now hidden from our  
view. Normal lighting.*)

REV. MOTHER : (*Coming forward*) She's only fainted, Father.

FATHER SHERIDAN : Do you think a doctor should be called ?

REV. MOTHER: I don't think it's necessary. This sudden weakness may be the best thing possible for her. She will have to rest now and take nourishment.

FATHER SHERIDAN: I shall call again in the morning after first Mass.

REV. MOTHER: Thank you, Father, for all your trouble and goodness to-night.

*(Sister Agnes comes forward with his hat and gloves. She leads the way, and he follows, obviously with considerable relief. A pause).*

SISTERS: Reverend Mother!  
Look! Look!

*(The sisters are grouped at each side and behind chair supporting Sister Eucharica who is recovering. They have removed her hood and cape and rolled back the sleeves of her habit, so that her arms are bared. On her arms are thick, knotted chains. Her cropped head adds to her strange appearance).*

SISTERS: Look at the chains!  
Look at the chains!  
Where did she get them?

A SISTER: She must have found them  
In the carthouse.

SISTERS: Look at the bruises!  
Terrible bruises on each arm.  
O the pain she must have suffered!  
The pain she has endured!

SISTER ANGELICA: *(with tears of joy)* Was I not right, Mother?  
She is a saint. She is a saint.

CHORUS OF SISTERS: Yes. Yes . . A saint!

*(Sister Eucharica opens her eyes slowly as if she were still in trance, her head raised, her body seems to become strangely rigid. As if compelled, the sisters slowly withdraw. She is now isolated in light and the community is grouped in the surrounding dimness).*



CHORUS OF SISTERS : *(softly, following each gesture and action)*

She is getting up.

She is getting up.

She cannot see us now.

All, all is dark

To her unseeing eyes.

Angels are supporting her.

She turns, she turns.

Angels lead her to the chapel.

Her feet still know the way.

Why does she stop ?

Why does she stop ?

Why does she hesitate ?

She is listening.

She is listening.

Her soul must wait

*(almost in a whisper)*

For a sign, for a sign

From God

*(The chapel bell sounds a deep solemn note).*

CHORUS : *(in wonder)* The bell is ringing by itself !

A miracle ! A miracle !

*(Sister Eucharica hesitates, turns and, as if following each stroke of bell, mounts the steps and disappears. There is silence, broken only by a few sobs. The tension becomes intolerable).*

SISTER GABRIEL : *(suddenly coming forward)*

God help us all, to-night !

I am afraid, I am afraid that

Something will happen. I know

That something will happen.

CHORUS : We are afraid. We are afraid.

REV. MOTHER : *(taking control)*

We must be calm. This is God's will.

*(The light gradually has become normal. Rev. Mother beckons to Sister Agnes and Sister Stanislaus and gives them instructions. Sister Angelica comes forward).*

REV. MOTHER : *(gently, to Sister Angelica)*

Not you, Sister.

*(Sister Agnes and Sister Stanislaus go up steps swiftly and silently towards chapel. Once more there is an uneasy silence).*

CHORUS : O why are they so long ?  
 O why are they so long away ?

*(Rev. Mother motions to sisters for silence. Sister Agnes and Sister Stanislaus appear again at central doorway).*

BOTH : *(in broken voices)*  
 Sister Eucharist is dead.

*(For a moment there is complete silence followed by a murmur of consternation and grief. Rev. Mother signs significantly to the two sisters. They go up the steps again and turn right. During the subsequent scene they pass along corridor towards chapel bearing a folded pall).*

REV. MOTHER : *(motions for silence and comes forward)*  
 Why are you crying ? Why are you crying ?  
*(She pauses until all are attentive again).*

Sister Eucharist is now in Heaven,  
 God called her quickly to Himself ; she was  
 So pure in every act of love,  
 Could not delay. The rubbings of this world  
 Are ignorance of soul and when we have  
 That lesson off by heart, our daily thought  
 Is suffering.

The repetition, always  
 The repetition of the truths we know !  
 And yet we fail each time in practice, fail  
 In thought, forget, as inattentive children,  
 And head like a poor duster carries in  
 Confusion all that has been written plainly  
 On the blackboard.

*(slowly)*

This extraordinary night  
 Something has happened which we do not understand,  
 Some wonder that our senses have refused  
 To know. But we believe in humble faith  
 That God at last has granted to our order  
 A saint, a saint to stand within His Presence  
 And plead for us.

*(A murmur of joy)*

REV. MOTHER : (*admonishing*)                      No, no, do not rejoice  
So soon.

Have we not doubted ?

CHORUS :    We have doubted.

REV. MOTHER : Did we not fear ?

CHORUS :    We feared.

REV. MOTHER :    Our faith was weak.

CHORUS : Our faith was weak.

REV. MOTHER : (*pointing towards the chapel*)  
Let us pray.

*(Slow action. The Rev. Mother, followed by the nuns in procession, mounts steps. Sister Angelica is last. Lay sister enters, right).*

LAY SISTER : (*cautiously*)                      Sister ! Sister !

*(Sister Angelica comes down steps).*

LAY SISTER : (*weeping*)      I couldn't help it ! I couldn't help it !

SISTER ANGELICA : What do you mean ?

LAY SISTER : Sister, I rang the bell

But it was not my fault, no, not my fault.

I saw the bell rope and it seemed to move . .

Then something made me put my hand upon

The second knot and something made me ring

The bell. But it was not my fault, no, no,

Truly, for I have not been my own self

To-day.

SISTER ANGELICA : (*pausing, and then gradually with a smile of inspiration*)

This is a lesson for us all.

LAY SISTER : (*puzzled*) But Sister . .

SISTER ANGELICA : Because you are humble and always willing,  
God chose you for His will to-night.

*(The Litany for the Dead is heard without. The lay sister looks at Sister Angelica in wonder and alarm, but the latter takes her arm gently and both mount the steps).*

C U R T A I N .

# DESCRIPTION OF GISSING

By Vincent O'Sullivan

M. EMILE HENRIOT, the well-known critic of *Le Temps*, who is widely read not only in France but in Europe, has written his introduction to this translation of *Born in Exile* in a tone of respect and admiration which Gissing has not often found in England. This is the second book of his which has been translated into French. Towards the end of the Naturalist period, about the same time that George Moore's *A Mummer's Wife* was translated, Fasquelle, the publisher of Zola and most of the other Naturalists, published a translation of *New Grub Street* under the title of *La Rue Meurt-de-Faim*. It does not seem to have had much success, the probable reason being that although there are and have always been Grub Street hacks in plenty in France, the conditions as they present themselves are so very different between them and their English brethren as to be scarcely recognizable for essentially the same thing. It would not be amiss to reprint this translation, for there appears to be at present a prevailing notion among French writers, men and women, that English writers are paid enormously more than they are themselves.

Gissing himself is a contradiction of this. In the French annals, where there are so many wretched cases of authors, few are more wretched than Gissing's life was for the longest part of it. Morley Roberts, in his "romanced" biography of his friend, relates that Gissing complained to him that he only received £50 for each novel he carried regularly to the publishers. Mr. Roberts urged him to try another publisher and offered to back him up. But misfortune and privation had rendered Gissing so timid before the facts of life that he preferred to stick to his old publishers whose £50, he said, was *sure*.

Happily things brightened for him a little before the end. We find him writing to Clodd, the banker, from the Basque coast where he died, that he had earned no more than £250 by his last book, and he adds bitterly that he does not see how himself and his wife are to live. He had lived with a wife for many years on £50 a novel—and long novels as they were in those days, "three-deckers," which could not be written in a few months.

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NÉ EN EXIL, by George Gissing, with a Preface by Emile Henriot. (Paris: 1937).



It is not easy to account for his persistent bad luck. The nature of his work had, no doubt, something to do with it. He got the name among circulating-library subscribers of being "depressing." He was married three times. He had no vices—that is to say, he did not drink or smoke to excess. But a woman, or women, he could not live without. Given his circumstances, it may be said that a large part, at any rate, of his misfortunes came from that. He saw some girl of a random class whose body appealed to him. As he had no money to keep her in a separate lodging, to have her he was obliged to marry her, and then live with her in a sort of rat-hole day in day out. Then, as the attraction of the flesh began to grow stale, he most unreasonably lamented that the girl could not be an intellectual companion to a man who knew three foreign literatures besides the Greek and Latin classics. Hence discord and boredom on both sides. Harriet Westbrook came to bore Shelley, but who can say what oceans of boredom Shelley poured over Harriet? Two people at the north and south poles trying to establish a contact. Gissing meets somewhere a girl who has a little intelligence, a little physical attraction, and shuns his wife. She consoles herself with other men, and drinks desperately, as only English and Russian women can when they take to it. In a few years she dies. Meanwhile, she had made his life a hell. That, in the rough, is the history of his first two marriages. The third was different.

She was a French woman whom he knew in London. Nobody seems to know much about her. It is certain that they lived well together and that she was with him when he died at Saint Jean-de-Luz, where the name of Gissing is utterly unknown to this day.

Gissing was a scholar, it is said an excellent scholar. Some have thought he was more fitted to be a scholar than a novelist. However that may be, some of his novels are very good. It says a great deal for his artistic conscience that although he knew that his inexorable pictures of mean and sordid conditions of life in London, from which even crime is absent, could never bring him popularity, he stuck to his plan and maintained a high level of excellence when carelessness or splash would have made little difference. For it is unlikely that old Fifty-Pounder cared anything at all about the *quality* of the goods. Given the requisite bulk, he would have come across with his fifty as per usual!

The merit was additional in Gissing in that he had little sympathy with most of his characters. He took them as instruments, not with any notion of protest or reform. All his sympathies were with what in his time was called the upper middle-class—families of clergymen, lawyers, doctors, professors—a class from which he himself, though he felt himself an equal, was excluded by social conditions. *Born in Exile* is the drama of this exclusion. He was not in the least a snob in the sense that Thackeray was and some others. The aristocratic class, the titled and wealthy class, did not interest him. What he wanted was a "lady" to be his companion—that is to say, a girl brought up in civilized surroundings whose life had never been degraded by poverty and the shifts of needy parents. For him almost all that he regards as evil in the world is caused by poverty. A woman, for example, like his first wife, who shouted and swore and talked bawdy, might still have been tolerated by another sort of man, but not by Gissing, who became as time passed morbid on the subject of feminine vulgarity and longed for some one "refined"—a word he often employs. But such a girl was out of his reach because, outcast and poor, he had no means of getting to know her. And indeed this middle-class into which he longed to be assimilated is far more chary and suspicious of admitting a nondescript like Gissing, a man, in the phrase himself invented, of the "Nomad" class, than are genuine aristocrats or the very rich.

*Born in Exile* cannot be accepted as one of his best novels, though he may have thought it was himself. It is not a broad picture of class rivalry in the Marxian sense. It contains no social revindications of a political nature. It is not a gregarious appeal; it does not speak for a group or any section of human society. But what the book sets out to do it does well, and that is to shadow forth the struggles, humiliations, and rebuffs which a cultivated and sensitive man has to endure because he wants to be received on an equal footing by the family and friends of a girl he desires to marry. As may be seen, the book is entirely individualist. That there were a number of men up and down the world in more or less the same position did not influence its development. No; it was the fact that himself, George Gissing, had his life vulgarized and ruined by poverty, that he was deprived of all he desired most—the society of good-mannered

cultured men, and especially women, theatres, pictures, music, rare books, journeys to beautiful places in the world ; and was condemned to live in a slum with a drunken harlot for a wife.

If *Born in Exile* lack the appeal of a great novel, the reason may be that it is hard to get up much sympathy with the ideal it exposes, and hard to see the tragedy of being excluded from the society of the kind of people the hero of it thirsted to know. There was something of the provincial town apothecary's son in all that. It is not easy to perceive this tragedy outside the British Isles, or perhaps within the British Isles nowadays. The central idea of *Born in Exile* must be lost on the French. Even a critic so alert to all values as M. Emile Henriot partially misses it. He takes it as a social protest ; it is on the contrary exclusively an individual protest. The protagonist contends for nothing or nobody but himself. Gissing took poor people in squalor, not through sympathy, but because they were in front of him. They were poor, and some of them starving ; he was too. Why should he snivel over them ? Many of them earned much more than he did. The case presents itself differently to the French mind. What Gissing keeps altogether on grounds of sentiment and personal hardship, the Frenchman involves at once in politics, makes common cause with all deprived like himself, and attacks the state of society which renders such ostracism possible.

Still, this protest, however restricted the presentation, Gissing took very much to heart. If *Born in Exile* is the most elaborate development of it, the argument may be found scattered among his novels. When he succeeded in keeping it out, as in *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Whirlpool*, he did what he did best in novel writing. *In the Year of Jubilee* has not a subject where the idea could be put forward without seeming dragged in ; and by the time he wrote *The Whirlpool* he had arrived at the haven where he would be, he had now the entry into comfortable middle-class families, and may have found their society less attractive than it had seemed at a distance.

One can hardly say whether he ever did quite the best he had it in him to do. His best novels were written during the last fifteen to eighteen years of Victoria's reign. There are signs in them that certain scenes and situations he would have ordered differently, pushed to their logical outcome, had he been writing in the comparative freedom which prevails to-day. He had

to keep his eye on the circulating libraries, or his pittance of £50 would have gone, and then there would not have remained to him even a room to write in.

But given his period, he was not wanting in boldness on occasion. Long ago he advanced the theory for which Léon Blum, the French Socialist politician, has lately been so much blamed in some quarters since the reprint of his book on Marriage. It turns on the opinion that the discords of marriage arise through the married pair seeing too much of each other, and that they would do better to have separate lodgings and see each other, say ! twice a week. This is set forth without the least ambiguity by Gissing's character *Waymark*, who, it seems, was himself not much changed. Whatever else may be thought of the idea, it is the idea of a man temperamentally unfitted for marriage, essentially a celibate.

He had no faith in Socialism ; no desire to see a Socialist Government in power ; no appeal to revolution, because revolution would sweep away all the protected groves of culture, all the trim mansions with gardens, and a tall girl, quiet and " refined," watering the flowers on a summer afternoon. When at last things took a turn for the better, he was occasionally seen in the houses of bankers and other rich people, where he seemed pleased to be, and certainly never manifested the least desire that somebody would explode a bomb or otherwise upset the place, as some martial " Reds " have been known to do in like circumstances, and even within hearing of a hostess whose invitation they were free to refuse. Some of this prosperous class he describes in *The Whirlpool*, if with no marked benevolence, with no jealousy or animosity either.

Among the numerous books which Gissing wrote there are some which those intending to read him should be warned against. When he was " discovered " in the eighteen-nineties after he had done nearly all his best work, some extremely foolish people decided, and perhaps managed to persuade him for a moment, that he was the successor of Dickens. Accordingly, he abridged Forster's *Life*, wrote a *Life* of Dickens himself, and worst of all, some novels he supposed to be in the manner of Dickens—*The Town Traveller*, *Will Warburton*, some others. All this is the work of a man stupefied by poverty and neglect who at last sees a chance to get a little money above the life-line and clutches



at it. In reality he had nothing whatever in common with Dickens except that they both pourtray the poorer classes among the London population ; but the poor people they present are so different in desires, temperament, expression, that they might be inhabitants not only of different cities, but of different nations. If Gissing has his own peculiar merits, he has nothing of Dickens' exuberance, high spirits, general sympathy. And if he has not, perhaps happily, a sign of Dickens' pathos, neither has he a sign of Dickens' humour. I cannot recall a single passage in Gissing which would move the most hilarious to a forced smile even. In a letter written towards the end of his life, he says, referring to an article by Andrew Lang, that he takes less and less interest in what people say about him, and then adds that he feels himself much more akin to Thackeray than to Dickens. This I thought most likely long before I saw the letter.

## 2

One might moralize over many pages upon the life of Gissing and draw lessons in many directions from it. He himself pondered much on the disaster his life was. He concludes that the pursuit of literature exercised as a means of livelihood is the most deceptive of all professions and to be discouraged in all those who have not some other source of income. To write continually, he thinks, and from necessity, ends by killing the faculty a man has to enjoy not only the masterpieces of literature, but of painting and music as well. Then, the conditions in which the author works seemed to Gissing deplorable. If he is engaged on a long and arduous work he is tortured by anxiety as to what the financial return will be. A metal-worker, scene-shifter, type-setter, who knows his trade, knows where he stands ; his work has a fixed value, and if he perceives any attempt to underpay him he calls in his syndicate or trade-union. But a book has only the value put on it by a man who offers to buy it, and into this man's estimate enter a number of factors with which the author has strictly nothing to do—such as, the kind of commercial year the business has had ; what the estimate of the commercial profit to be gained by the book which is offered ; and with that, what the risk of loss if the author is paid more than a derisory price. Between writer and publisher the fight is on the side of the publisher.

“ You won't take what we offer ? All right ! You can go to

hell. We are not here to supply you with the means of livelihood. We are here to make money for ourselves, and that we can make easily without you. We have authors in our backyard."

A few of these authors are important investments. There are, and have been, writers who have earned a lot of money—Galsworthy, Bennett, Maugham, some writers of police novels. But the master of the police novel, Edgar Allan Poe, could not get enough to clothe himself decently. Baudelaire never earned enough to buy himself a good meal. This is one of the most curious cases. In 1865 the brothers Garnier were considered the most astute publishers in Paris. That year, Baudelaire, living in misery in Brussels, offered them his complete writings for a very small sum. They refused. Since, Baudelaire's writings have made almost fortunes for not one, but several, publishers.

Gérard de Nerval, Verlaine, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Barbey d'Aurevilly, were never paid a decimal of what since their death their work has earned for publishers. Then, there was Jane Austen—she did not get very much, did she? in comparison with what her books have earned for publishers in the last hundred odd years. And those poor Brontës.

Such reflections which ruined Gissing's calm, and sense of even relative security, came in the not far end to ruin his resistance also. Here was a man of the highest intellectual powers without the means often to put a piece of bread in his mouth. Yes, that was how it was. Where lay the blame? In Gissing's opinion, on the profession of the writer, the man who depends on people who put an arbitrary value on what he offers for sale.

Personally, I don't think that if I were a publisher I should offer much more for some of the novels Gissing produced than the £50 he got. Books such as *Thyrza* are not exactly bad; but they are the work of a man mentally exhausted, who cannot present his characters efficiently, and cannot perceive that he is incapable of doing it owing to insufficient nourishment, worry, and a disgusting home. To-day the flabby *Thyrza*, with its feeble echoes of Ruskin and Carlyle, and the "intelligent" working-man living virtuously with his aged mother, would hardly find a publisher at all. One may say, Why should it? But one may say too that a sick and care-worn man, bowed under domestic cares, had given to it nine months or a year of his miserable life so as to have the means of living a little longer.

It has, I believe, been said that if Gissing had been a school-master most of his woes might have been escaped. They might ; but it remains to be said that Gissing himself perceived no such solutions. Nor does a very eminent French writer, in a good position to study the misfortunes of authors, who in the *Figaro* not long ago criticized the suggestion of Sinclair Lewis that the solution of the miseries of authors is to give them a second trade. And Mr. Lewis suggests that they should become grocers. But the Frenchman recalls with good sense that to open a grocer's shop takes capital, and then a knowledge of the business, and an absorption in it from morning to night. The poetry or other books put together in odd moments spared from the shop, will be, he thinks, very poor stuff ; or, supposing the grocer to be really a writer, the grocery business will soon collapse. And indeed it is hard to imagine Baudelaire or Verlaine or Mallarmé running a shop with any success at all. Balzac tried to run a printing-house : he died at fifty wrecked by his debts. And Lamartine, whose exterior career seemed so brilliant, poet, novelist, orator, politician, being short of money, established himself as wine merchant to sell the wine of his mortgaged estate, and as a consequence passed his last days as a hanger-on in publishers' offices, glad of an advance of fifty francs to enable him to eat.

Gissing never considered seriously the rather naive proposition of Mr. Sinclair Lewis, who has himself no reason to be dissatisfied. He may feel at times a little tired after the effort of producing one of his long books and he may wish he had another business on the side. He may even have the aptitudes of a successful grocer ; but even so he would hardly succeed in combining book-writing and the sale of groceries in one paying business. Gissing at times seemed inclined to prefer the patron to the publisher. There were patrons and patrons. Too many patrons imagined that their bounty gave them a right over body and soul of the object of it. Not only did they dictate what he was to write and how he was to write it, but they followed him into his private life.

Gissing's ultimate conclusion as to the best condition for a writer who is not independent is a protected life with all material cares obviated, such as Cowper and Coleridge found. But in that too lurks vexation of spirit which Gissing did not see plainly, because surcease from material worry seemed to him the highest boon.

# MYSTERY BEYOND PSYCHOANALYSIS

By R. L. Mégroz

IN the *Satyricon*—that vivid novel of the Rome of the first century—Petronius wrote: "It is not the shrines of the Gods, nor the powers of the air that send the Dreams which mock the mind with flitting shadows; each man makes dreams for himself. For when rest lies about the limbs subdued by sleep, and the mind plays with no weight upon it, it pursues in the darkness whatever was its task by daylight. The man who makes towns tremble in war, and overwhelms unhappy cities in flames, sees arms, and routed hosts, and the death of Kings, and plains streaming with outpoured blood. They whose life is to plead cases have statutes and the courts before their eyes, and look with terror upon the judgment seat surrounded by a throng. The miser hides his gains and discovers buried treasure. The hunter shakes the woods with his pack. The sailor snatches his shipwrecked bark from the waves, or grips it in death agony. The woman writes to her lover, the adulteress yields herself, and the dog follows the track of the hare as he sleeps. The wounds of the unhappy endure into the night season." It is a verse-passage supposed to be spoken by the rogue-poet, Eumolpus, but we may fairly attribute the ideas to the author.

The reader of this passage, while acknowledging its lucid avoidance of ancient superstition, recognises that it is not quite consistent with the tendency of dreams to reveal the opposite or other-self of the person that is known in waking life, but it seems also to correct the one-sided tendency of psychoanalytic theory by stressing the importance of the mind's affinities in creating the dream world. If there were space to develop this aspect of our theme, it might be shown how it leads to the mystical view of the law of spiritual gravitation described by Æ (*Dublin Magazine*—Jan.-Mar. 1938). I am concerned more with the influence of modern psychology upon our view of the nature of man. Psychoanalytic theory has been often strengthened, or at least made more influential, by ill-considered attacks much resembling those which used to be directed against evolutionary theories. Strong feeling and strong language made up for scientific deficiencies and weak logic, and they were devoted ostensibly



to defending the dignity of mankind. The essentials of evolution are accepted now though the original theories have been and are always being modified. It is time that the essentials of psycho-analytic theory were accepted in spite of greater and more frequent modifications so that attention may be paid to the tendency of modern psychology to narrow the field of reality and ignore aspects of the mind which will not fit into a materialistic theory.

Although Petronius was reacting against extravagant popular superstitions and condemning the quackeries of the professional diviners of dreams, he had behind him a tradition that then included the constructive work of Artemidorus, whose treatise of dreams dealt with the curative interpretation in a way that presaged Freud while accepting and trying to study what we should now call supernormal cognition in dreams. It is noteworthy that many of the examples given by Petronius fail to support his assumption that the dream merely continues the waking occupation of the conscious mind. His idea of the mind being released to play with imagery is understandable nowadays in the light of modern analysis. We realise that the mind in sleep presents in dramatic symbols our more or less buried anxieties and wishes. Petronius did not realise that it would be just as true—and perhaps truer—to say that the fighting soldier dreams of a peaceful countryside where the submerged self in him fain would be. But there are indications that he may have got beyond the “rational” view of nineteenth century psychology, that dreams were but fitting shadows of memory, chaotic and fragmentary relicts of the waking hours.

Now the power of remembering is indeed a peculiarity of the mind that in spite of being familiar remains amazing.

The older psychologists noted many remarkable instances of apparently forgotten impressions being revived by some appropriate stimulus, because this operation illustrated their favourite theory of the association of ideas. Sometimes the connecting link was not easy to find, but the power of the reduplicative memory was, and is, beyond dispute. The classic example was that of the ignorant servant girl who, as related by S. T. Coleridge, in delirium babbled perfect Hebrew. It was discovered that she had once been servant to an old Hebrew scholar who talked Hebrew out loud in her hearing. Psychologists like Janet, who have studied hysteria and multiple personalities

have recorded many such cases, where the normal personality is submerged by another which has hitherto remained in the background, or, as we should say, in the unconscious. The Belgian, Varendonck, a modern psychologist who stresses the importance of association of ideas, in "The Psychology of Day-Dreams," quotes a personal experience which many have shared. It shows how the reduplicative memory may be coloured eventually by egoistic wishes, and is all the better for being very simple. He had enjoyed an unexpected success in the delivery of a public speech, and after he had left the scene of his triumph the speech repeated itself in his mind. The passages with which he was most pleased were still repeating themselves the next day. The next step, he says, was an ability to repress this memory, except when he was day-dreaming, then he indulged in a fantasy by adding improvements to the original passages, inventing new metaphors and arguments. He concludes that our reduplicative memory (which accounts also for the retention of old habits) is akin to the primitive instincts of which William James wrote: "The habits to which there is an innate tendency are called instincts."

Psychoanalysis has laid stress upon the egoistical transformations of this reduplicative memory in our dreams, when images become charged with emotional meanings not apparent to the working mind. The most generally familiar element of a dream is the dramatisation of desires, and fears, and even of intellectual problems, all emotions being usually more vivid than in the waking state. That rather overbearing conversationalist, Dr. Johnson, probably had an undercurrent of misgivings at times when he was most assertively demonstrating his own wisdom, and so, according to Boswell, he dreamed of a dialectical contest with some other person in which "he was very much mortified by imagining that his opponent had the better of him." In the dream his mind had staged a dramatic presentation of his self-criticism. Many people who are tongue-tied or too humble in company recover their self-assertion in dreaming by a compensating fantasy of sweeping all before them. Such egoistic fantasies are the material of most day-dreaming, which is a partial release of the subconscious mental activity into consciousness.

In examining the mechanism of dreams we find that the mind can dramatise a story from a sensory stimulus like heat

or cold affecting some part of the body. The psychoanalyst reminds us that whatever the physical cause of the dream may have been, the imagery and mood of the dream contain an emotional significance referring to personal problems of the dreamer. Dr. Johnson's dream of arguing might very well have been set going in that particular form by voices outside his window when he was still asleep. We are told that a biological purpose of the dream is to save us from waking up when disturbed, and this disturbance which the mind is trying to digest, or cover up with a story, may be an inner conflict as well as an external attack upon the quiescent nerves.

The inner disturbance, due to experiences that the conscious mind has wholly or mainly forgotten, is what the psychoanalyst means by a "complex." After Freud laid down the principles of his system of analysis in "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1913), other psychologists revealed aspects of the "complex" tending to extend the scope of the emotional conflict beyond the universal sexual wishes, which however might still occur as an original source of later personal problems. Remembering that much of the apparently destructive and materialistic effect of psychoanalytical explanations of our dreams is due to the study of patients suffering from serious neuroses, we must realise also that this pathological psychology was the cause of a great increase in psychological knowledge applicable to more normal people. How the new psychology is being applied to the study of all kinds of human activity, as in anthropology, art, education and religion, is exemplified by Mr. J. A. Hadfield,\* who says: "Some psycho-neurotic patients suffer from obsessions which take the form of performing rituals and ceremonial acts, and avoidance of taboos like the 'contamination complex.' Psychopathology has investigated those curious conditions in the individual, and their source is now well-nigh discovered as the conflict between forbidden unconscious self-willed desires and the fear of consequences. These ceremonial acts are in part the attempt to propitiate for these desires, and to avert their evil consequences. But these neurotic compulsions of civilised man are of precisely the same nature as the curious customs, ceremonial acts, and taboos of primitive man, the meaning of which we can only guess at in

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\* Introduction to "Psychology and Modern Problems" (1935).

observing him, and which he himself cannot, as a rule, explain, except by some plausible but shallow rationalization, since he cannot, any more than the neurotic, understand their real significance, but upon which psychopathology can throw considerable light. The same applies to 'anxiety states' from which so many patients suffer, irrational fears of trifling objects or situations, not themselves the objects of fear, so analogous to the fear prevalent amongst primitive people, which is not fear of objective dangers like wounds and death, but fear of unknown or mysterious forces. In psychopathology we discover that these fears are fears of repressed impulses within ourselves, of unknown and unconscious forces, which become projected on to outside objects because the real object of fear is hidden and repressed."

Very good. And in anthropology a great deal of valuable work is being done, applying Freudian theories to understand the social customs of savages and half-civilised peoples that must be, after all, the beginnings of our own. But what have the academic psychologists of to-day in their anthropological researches attempted in the study of "supernormal" powers of mind claimed universally by savage and civilised peoples? They attempt no criticism whatever; they seem to be afraid of the subject; they will, like Dr. J. S. Lincoln, a disciple of the eminent Dr. Seligman, record those dreams of savages that profess to be "prophetic," for instance, among the other specimens of dreams they are able to collect, but the implicit assumption is precisely the same as their Victorian predecessors' explicit assumption, that such beliefs in mysterious powers of cognition are the result of superstitious ignorance. The answer really is a lemon—a lemon as rotten with age as that other one—"co-incidence"—applied to every mysterious experience among civilised people of cognition outside the known laws of time and space, or possibly one should say outside our knowledge of the mind itself.

This is too big a subject to follow up now, but there is a theory which psychologists and anthropologists have been skirmishing around for some twenty years. While the world seethes with racial antagonisms it has an interesting bearing upon the endangered ideal of world citizenship. The problem has been whether human mentality spontaneously develops in separate centres out of an inherent and universal tendency; or whether there are fundamental differences between the psyche of



one kind of people and another, so that the development of cultures is traceable and must be traceable to some common source, instead of being original and spontaneous in various centres.

An important school of anthropology, once led by Professor G. Elliott Smith, has favoured the theory of the transmission of knowledge and culture, the implication being that when we find similar ideas and designs in widely separated parts of the globe, the similarities point to a common source of wisdom. This common source is supposed to be a geographical region where human genius first rose to its possible heights. Much support has been given to this school of thought because it has also stressed the value of the cultural achievements of our prehistoric ancestors and argued for the existence of an early golden age that proved mankind to be naturally capable of living in peaceful security. Elliott Smith also made a sweeping attack upon the Freudian theory of a universal sexual motive in the customs and dreams of primitive societies and the early civilisations. He argued that primitive rituals and the earlier religious ideas were not essentially sexual in their unconscious motives, but that the dominant interest was the process of reproduction or life-giving. He concluded that the sexual instinct therefore was secondary to the craving for a life-giving elixir in the development of folk-tale, myth and religion, and declares that "the recognition of this unquestionable fact destroys the foundations of the speculations of Freud, Jung and their followers." There are good reasons for accepting Elliott Smith's views about the comparative importance in early societies of the quest for more life, though he exaggerated the destructive theoretical effect of such a fact. Certainly for our present purpose it is sufficient to note that the quarrel revolves round a choice of two impulses both of which are admitted to be universal and not dependent upon the external influence of some other tribe or nation. They occur spontaneously as inherent expressions of the human animal.

Now the older anthropologists, from Sir Edward Tylor ("Primitive Culture," concluded in 1871) to the learned Sir James Frazer ("The Golden Bough") found an almost monotonous similarity between the ideas of primitive peoples in all parts of the world, and probably overstressed the uniformity of human thought-processes and blurred the distinctions between the mentality of savages and civilized peoples. As a counterblast



to this tendency, Professor Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, in "Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures" (translated by Lilian A. Clare as "How Natives Think," Allen and Unwin) attacked the "animism" of Tylor and Frazer and even went so far as to question whether we can ever understand the really primitive thought. His most interesting suggestion, I think, was that savages shared their mentality by a "law of participation," and not only among themselves but by identifying the self readily with other creatures and objects.

So far from this "law of participation" which dominates the savage mind being incomprehensible to us, it seems quite commonly reflected in childish mentality, and is often illustrated in our adult dreaming, which is largely infantile. When Lévy-Bruhl says we cannot retrace our steps to make contact with this primitive world, he is surely underestimating the possibilities of psychology applied to dreams. Moreover "the primitive's response to collective needs and sentiments which are profound and mighty and of compulsive force" is to be observed, in a lesser degree certainly and often misdirected, in the intensity of national consciousness fostered by some modern states as a quick means to material power.

In another and more significant aspect, the "law of participation" controlling savage mentality may be a primitive form of a cosmic or mystical consciousness of unity. The late Edward Carpenter, the author of the now forgotten "Towards Democracy" and a student of oriental philosophy, adumbrated a theory of a mystical union enjoyed by animals and primitive man which was lost in the process of acquiring scientific knowledge. He was able to translate the terms of ancient myths like that of the Garden of Eden and the loss of man's state of peace and certainty into a psychological account of the gradual isolation of the ego, shut in by the walls of analytical thought and the growth of his self-love. Carpenter in accord with the world's sages suggested that mankind's next progressive phase must be a recovery of the lost Eden by a fresh communion, though on a higher plane than that of the animal. There are innumerable signs, in many of the records of "supernormal" perception (which answer to the description of the Buddhist "manaw" or sixth sense), whether in dreams or trance, that the human psyche has not lost its disused primitive powers.

Approaching this question from the materialistic angle of the psychological anthropologist of to-day, Dr. Seligman sets out to refute Lévy-Bruhl's hypothesis. It is astonishing to a layman to behold the want of cohesion among so many fine minds of researchers to-day. While declaring, as a result of his valuable study of type-dreams, that there is "no basic difference in mode of thought of savages and ourselves, but only quantitative difference," Dr. Seligman has no constructive criticism of the "mystical" and "prelogical" thought of savages. He merely asserts that these characteristics do not exist to such an extent as to make savage thinking differ radically from ours. In his lucid essay "The Unconscious in Relation to Anthropology" (British Jl. of Psych., General Section, Vol. 18, April, 1928) he points out that it is relatively easy for savages to pass into "states of dissociation," meaning madness, trances, and so on. He suggests that probably the unconscious passes into the conscious more readily than among white races, as it does with white neurotics; which invites a consideration of the supernormal powers of perception or "cosmic consciousness" often displayed by people in abnormal states. (What will soon trouble the psychologists is the growing evidence that such powers seem to be possessed by people who cannot be described as neurotic).

For our present purpose, the most valuable part of Dr. Seligman's essay is his discovery of what he calls "type-dreams" among unrelated savage communities that are fundamentally the same in their "latent content"; also social customs and beliefs,—the "manifest content" or externalisation of the type-dreams. The type-dreams that he regards as universal include the tooth-losing dream, the flying dream, and the climbing dream. To this he adds a new one in such a classification, that of eating raw meat. He found this dream regarded as a presage of misfortune in Ireland, Switzerland, Greece, Galicia, the Ukraine, the Africa Gold Coast, Nigeria and Tanganyika, and in Bornea, Achin, and China. To these he added as a type-dream the examination dream, caused by the strain of having to pass examinations. He concludes: "it would seem that the occurrence of type dreams, especially the examination dream, in which the dream is determined by similar features in the environment of two widely different races (*e.g.* Chinese and Teutonic) is an important fact affording strong evidence against the necessity

to postulate transmission in the distribution of similar beliefs and simple technical devices in widely separated parts of the world."

Most critical students of literature or of any art must feel surprise at the influence of the transmission theory. The carefully stated conclusion of Dr. Seligman hardly seems to require the machinery of anthropological evidence to make it acceptable. We know that transmission of ideas occurs, and that civilisation overflows from community to community, but it is surely of the very essence of creative thinking that an original and individual element is manifested, especially in those directions which belong to art. And this unique character of any individual creative effort always has a universal quality which is essential to it, which is only another way of saying that great minds think alike independently of each other. But if great minds—that is to say the minds that create permanent forms—think alike, so must all human minds, in this special sense think alike, obeying the same fundamental laws of perception and feeling. The spontaneity of creation seems to me such a necessary and obvious attribute of human intelligence that I am driven to believe the vogue of the transmission theory owes much to our sympathy with other tenets of the Elliott Smith-Perry school, such as the insistence on warfare being an acquired habit and not a fundamental characteristic of human society. There is again the tendency to take sides for or against Freudian theory in anthropology, a most unfortunate and largely irrelevant division.

When we see the scientific students presenting valuable knowledge but opposing each other all along the line over confused issues, are we not entitled to borrow whatever is convenient for an independent philosophy? I have tried to show in what respect I agree with anthropologists who are skirmishing over the bones of truth and perhaps neglecting the possibility of a deeper synthesis outside their specialist arguments, a synthesis that involves the living body of truth. But mystical apprehension is still, for science, in the domain of pathology, and if we want an intellectual comprehension of mankind's homogeneity without omitting the more mysterious (or might one say the religious?) elements, we must get it for ourselves by the eclectic method.

# WILLIAM MAGINN

*By J. Lyle Donaghy*

**B**ORN in Cork in 1793, and educated at his father's academy there, until at ten years of age he entered Trinity College, Dublin ; afterwards classical master in his father's school, and, on his father's death in 1813, conducting the school himself for ten years, Maginn entered the literary world through the pages of the *Literary Gazette* and *Blackwell's Magazine*. In 1820 he went to London, where he was welcomed by the editors of the chief journals. In 1823 he married a lady of the name of Bullen, and soon after he gave up the school, in order to devote himself to literature. "There was a field for him (as Lockhart noted)" — I quote from Montagu, "in essay, disquisition, review, romance, ballad, squib, pasquinade, and epigram ; in Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Irish, Italian, English and slang."

As Montagu remarks, he could easily have achieved success "in the shape of serious work, could he only have schooled himself to the requisite application. But sustained effort was against the grain. Only by fits and starts it was that he could work, the ardour of composition under difficulties having an irresistible fascination for his radically discursive intellect." I doubt the psychology of the last part of the statement, the last clause, but not the fact.

Intemperate habits eventually dissolved several literary engagements, and his life, it is said, was weighed down with grief and care, no small portion of it, in fact, being passed in imprisonment for debt, or in obscure retreats from the sheriff's officer. Thackeray once came to his relief with a gift of five hundred pounds. But evidently he was extravagant also, and his final downfall came in 1842, when, broken in health and fortune, he retired to Walton-on-Thames, where he expired in the arms of his attached friend Edward Vaughan Kenealy on the 21st August. Twice before his death his political enemy, Sir Robert Peel (Maginn was an Orangeman) had befriended him with a secret subscription of £100.

In an epitaph, Lockhart wrote :

"Here, early to bed, lies kind William Maginn,

\* \* \* \*

But at last he was beat and sought help from the bin



(All the same to the Doctor, from claret to gin),  
 Which led swiftly to gaol with consumption therein ;  
 It was much when the bones rattled loose in his skin,  
 He got leave to die here, out of Babylon's din.  
 Barring drink and the girls, I ne'er heard of a sin :  
 Many worse, better few, than bright, broken Maginn."

In the churchyard of Walton-on-Thames he sleeps. No stone marks the place of his repose.

The best of his work in prose and verse appeared in *Miscellanies*, edited by Montagu, in 1885.

Maginn had one of those swift and powerful intellects, almost overbearing in its tendencies. He would not have been overbearing to meet ; but when he took his pen in his hand he at once adopted something of a domineering and aggressive attitude. Whence was this? Naturally power must express itself and Maginn's was a powerful intellect ; naturally scholarship must take to itself something of the tone of the ruler and Maginn was a scholar. But the bluster, the bullying, the brow-beating, whence were these? Why, they were of Fleet Street, and they were of the age. The impatience, the over-running of diverse intellectual fields in confidence of a general scholarship—weighty-seeming theses, the erudite paraphernalia of blunder—these were of the journalism of Maginn's age. Look in the quarterlies of the period : in *Blackwood's*, the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Cornhill*—here in philosophical-sounding article after article protracted to great length, is the very genius of Doctor Foolishness. On such Maginn was bred. Likewise his pugnaciousness was of his age. It was an age in which the gentle arts of duelling, pistolling, horse-whipping and cudgelling had scarce yet died out, and he who resigned his rapier carried a sword-stick, when men still looked back regretfully with Mangan to the days.

“when the angry blow  
 Supplanted the word that chides  
 When hearts could glow, long long ago  
 In the time of the Barmecides.”

But streams are deflected not abolished, and a habit of mind persists long after the law has forbidden its customary expression. So as the sword fell into disuse the angry word came into its own. Attack and riposte became the mode of Letters. Certain perso-

nalities such as Johnson, and Dryden and Swift had given a great impetus to this duelling and assassinating movement in literature. Johnson's frequent substantial pomp, the dinosauric proportions of his character, his sometimes solid judgment, Dryden's, Pope's, satiric intensity, Swift's moral indignation, were not repeated; but the more did assault and battery become the road to literary eminence.

Far above the pother a few stars yet shone with measured splendour, whose serene effluence remembered Sidney. After the hollow stale rout would emerge new-bathed other stars shedding sweetness and light. But just now for a while, at that horrible transition from eighteenth-century literary humanism to middle nineteenth-century sincerity, in literary criticism all was vacuity, all was smoke. Criticism in fact lagged far behind creative literature. So it was that Keats fell a prey (in a certain sense) to bombastic charlatans; so it was that even Byron, generous and noble at heart, at heart sincere, and truly intellectual, fell blindly foul of the Lake Poets and Johnny Keats, though to his honour be it said that when *Hyperion* was published he was enthusiastic in its praise. Into such a critic's *ménage*, to such a trier's cauldron, bubbling deceit and nonsense, watched over not by Hippocrates but hypocrites, exploiting a false medicine, came with stored memory and vigorous faculties William Maginn. He laid hold of the instruments to his hand and set to to belabour with the best. Hence these main ingredients of Maginn's literary manner—arrogant controversialism, pedantry, headlong blunder. But in Maginn these were modified by (1) a native sense of humour; (2) a faith in the fundamental teachings of orthodox religion; (3) a genuine scholarship. All three qualities, in combination with the literary vices of his epoch, operated both well and ill—ill sometimes; for, of course, "Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds." His humour carried the day with a large stride, or it aggravated crudity and gave boredom another arm. When he was work-tired or drink-exhausted it mostly did the latter. His orthodox faith rallied their own weapons (along with better) against contemporary cant and bunkum, less successfully against vice; but it also prejudiced his philosophical vision and led him to impute some Puritan motives to Homer and Shakespeare, of which they were in all probability—and thank God!—guiltless. His genuine learning gave worth

to his criticism, brightened the sparkle, or it made inanity ponderous, turned the smile into a yawn.

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Two of Maginn's longest and most learned critical articles are his "Farmer's 'Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare' considered," and his article on "Lady Macbeth" which appear in *Miscellanies*. Both these articles are in many ways brilliant; but they are both partially unsatisfactory from a critical point of view. The latter, especially. Now, it is true that, even in opposition, a certain degree of soundness and worth in the opponent improves the standard of the debate, and that a reviewer will write best and produce more valuable materials, deliver sounder and more considered judgments, where some commencement has been made in integrity and depth in the work which he reviews.

It is well to remember this in estimating Maginn's review of Farmer. Farmer's essay, showing that Shakespeare had no knowledge of the classical languages, and was dependent, as regards classical materials, entirely upon translations, is the work of a pedantic half-learned nasty-natured imbecile. There is really no more to be said about it. Maginn, however, was invited to write a review of the essay—and did so. The effect is something like that which would be produced by a tank going over an assortment of empty canned-meat tins. Truly, as a demonstration of the tank's power it is neither very interesting nor very edifying, for empty canned-meat tins are only empty canned-meat tins though you adduce all science to their demolition. The tank, however, remains interesting even although it is no fortress which it demolishes.

Maginn's method in this review is not positive. He contents himself on the whole with demolishing his opponent's arguments against Shakespeare's having been learned linguistically. He does not on the other side himself adduce proofs in favour of Shakespeare's having been learned. In the case in hand, the negative method was sufficient for his purpose. He takes Farmer's main points and one after one exposes them in all their pitiful puerility. Enough of Farmer; let us consider the tank. Even in such mean employ, the tank has already left a clear road; for not only did it crush the tins, but such was its weight that it has inevitably left a broad smooth path behind it. When Maginn

laid down his pen, not only Farmer was gone, but much popular misunderstanding and musty nonsense.

It had become apparent among other things, that even if Shakespeare found it convenient to use translations in writing up classical materials in his plays, this was no proof that he derived from translations his manifest appreciation of the quality and flavour of originals, in Latin and Greek.

That Shakespeare knew Horace almost by heart in the original, and much of Virgil ; that he had access to Ovid in the original, and had read Homer in Greek, I do not doubt. Nevertheless, the main proofs of this fall into two very subtle categories. In the first category are a multitude of passages and phrases which must be regarded as renderings rather than translations of certain originals in Latin and Greek. Re-creations, they might be called, which have the twofold quality ; (1) That they could not have been done without verbal acquaintance with the originals ; (2) that they betray a correct *poetic* understanding of those originals, passing the understanding of the majority of scholars, and passing that of all translators of the classics of whom Shakespeare might have availed himself, with the possible exception, at times, of Chapman. Most of these passages and phrases Farmer and his kind had not observed. There was no occasion for Maginn to speak of them in his review.

One, however, of these passages, which Farmer did refer to may be cited as an example of the category, and because Maginn, made *the* important and necessary criticism of it. It is the passage in Hamlet :

“ See what a grace was seated on his brow !  
Hyperion’s curls : the front of Jove himself ;  
An eye like Mars to threaten and command ;  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.”

Here Maginn quotes Phaer’s version of the Virgilian passage and the original, and remarks : “ It will be seen . . . that Shakespeare has seized the spirit of the Roman poet better than his translator.”

That is fact. But the whole of Maginn’s remarks on this passage are good, and his remarks, a little further on, on the passage in *The Tempest* commencing :

“ Ye elves of hills, of standing lakes and groves ”



(which is indebted to Medea in Ovid) with his conclusion that "Ovid has contributed to the invocation of Prospero at least as much as Golding" (his translator whom Shakespeare evidently used as well as the original), are excellent.

In the second category are those larger fields of vision, which show that Shakespeare had an appreciation of the general atmosphere and quality of certain classical works, such that it could only have been rooted in first-hand knowledge of the originals. With regard to one strange case in this category, Maginn makes the very interesting and important observation: "*Troilus and Cressida* seems, indeed, written as an antagonism of the Homeric characters, so marked and peculiar as to leave a strong impression that the originals were studied. It would appear as if Shakespeare was trying his strength against Homer; as if he said 'The world has, for centuries, rung with the fame of *your* Ulysses. Well! here stands mine.'" (The play is, further, extremely interesting in that there, beyond question, the master dramatist is deliberately concerned to transpose an epic theme to the stage, and with master strategy has presented by suggestion on the stage, a not unworthy reflection of epic battle).

To conclude this part, there is much minor criticism in Maginn's review which is unsound, and his textual emendations of Shakespeare do not by any means recommend themselves to me. It is, however, considering the worthlessness of its occasion (Dr. Farmer's Essay) a great and brilliant review.

Almost equally brilliant in a different way is the article on Lady Macbeth. Here, however, the fundamental critical positions seem to me to be as unsound as in the review of the Farmer Essay, they are sound. Maginn passes in review the ladies of Shakespeare and the ladies of Homer and the Greek dramatists. He considers that "By the highest genius woman is always spoken of with a deep feeling of the most reverential delicacy."

He finds that in agreement with this doctrine it is only on the more morally beautiful aspects of Helen that Homer dwells, *i.e.* on a chastened Helen; that the blot on Virgil's epic is the fourth book, for there the conduct of Aeneas to Dido is extremely reprehensible; that Dante did not follow his master in dwelling on the pleasures or the gentler sorrows of illicit love, the tale of Francesca as gravely and solemnly told in the *Inferno* being no exception; he finds that Shakespeare's heroines conform to the

doctrine enunciated, and undertakes to bring Lady Macbeth into line with it ; he finds, however, that the great dramatists of Athens employed stories derogatory to woman, that the crimes, passions and misfortunes of their heroines could only darken the scene ; etc., etc. Upon these grounds he finds Shakespeare supereminent over all the great geniuses of the world in his women.

Now this is all confusion and based upon erroneous doctrine. It is true, as Lessing magnificently teaches, that great art is the creation of beauty ; but to ignore truths is no guarantee of the achievement of beauty, and especially is it no guarantee of the achievement of *the greatest moral beauty*. Yet I think it was the *greatest ultimate moral beauty*, a splendour of the human soul in conflict with utmost destiny that the Greek tragedians set out to portray—at any rate, which they did portray. Then, the case, as between epic and tragedy is different—epic and tragedy employ divergent methods. In epic the goal is beauty more immediately, almost to moulding it sculpturally ; in tragedy the goal is beauty still, but more remotely ; it is there an ultimate moral beauty, and the measure of it is the measure of the horror and darkness which beauty is made finally, by art, to subdue, of the chaos on which order is imposed.

We cannot allow Shakespeare supereminence for the reason adduced here by Maginn ; no more can we condemn Virgil *finally* on the grounds given by Maginn (though we *may* indeed find Virgil's epic structure faulty finally on the grounds proper to epic. Thus we *may* find it faulty finally because Virgil after Aeneas (the good Aeneas) has forsaken Dido permits him to continue in his rôle of hero without having been punished expressly for his fault, and without manifesting consciousness of guilt or repentance. We *may*, I say, but I do not hold that view, for I think that having regard to the particular philosophical burden of the poem—obedience to the Father—and to its character as the unfolding of a prophesied destiny, when we consider Juno's and Venus' parts in it, and that of Hermes the messenger of Zeus, and when finally we consider on the human side the presentation of the meeting of Aeneas with Dido in Hades, with all its greatly tragic suggestion—Virgil's treatment of this part of his theme, while not the best, is defensible. But though I think that the fundamental critical positions in the article on Lady Macbeth are unsound, much of the rest of Maginn's observations on the dramatic

progress of the play, and on the character of Lady Macbeth is interesting.

To turn to other work of Maginn : his critique on Lord Byron is severe but not unmerited ; on the other hand his criticism of Shelley's " Lament for Adonais " is a half-truth and palpably unfair. He seems also to have under-rated, surprisingly, Coleridge's " Christabel." With most of his trifles and smaller pieces I am almost entirely out of sympathy. Such things as his Latin rendering of " Chevy Chase " I think are dull and only indifferent clever. It is not clever to do them for they only contribute to hackney a fine poem. Maginn had not the lightness of touch and grace which make Father Prout's relics pleasing, to this day. Of course, much of the stuff I refer to was inevitably ephemeral and was never intended by its author to be anything else. Yet, absolve me, O world, of all priggery when I assert here my all-embracing incompetence to get into sympathy with the appalling vacuity of mind—barren it seems to me of spontaneous humour and only spontaneously dull—which issued in Mangan's " Apostrophe to the Comet," and in many of Maginn's smaller poems and articles, and which with kindred blatancy speaks its nothing in full many a wit of their epoch.

Maginn's ballad renderings of passages of the *Odyssey* are interesting, but not to my mind successful—they are too hard in their expression and miss both the beauty and nobility of the Homeric poems—Maginn was not a poet ; but if the translations are unsuccessful, the brief introduction to them, vigorous and perspicuous, is of the very best of Maginn. Good, too, is his prefatory note on the " Return from Troy."

And now I have carped and condemned and mixed praise with blame ; there remain, for a monument to the native genius of one of the most learned of the literary men of last century, two light works which seem to me completely successful and of enduring merit. These are *The Maxims of Sir Morgan O'Doherty, Bart.*, and the *Ten Tales*. In the *Maxims*, a vein of vigorous humour distinctly Maginn's is exploited to the full. Here even his prejudices come forth in a rollicking guise that moves to mirth, and mix with sage reflection in the mask of comedy and frank folly. Here through a hundred and forty-two maxims a strong style almost boisterously humorous full of resource, moves

carelessly and consistently to the end with no failing of the materials of humour.

*The Ten Tales*, first collected in a separate edition and published by Partridge in 1933, are of that order of narrative, which includes the last phase of the folk-tale in Ireland, and the anecdote of the West ; but they are of the cream of that degenerate world, and Maginn has made of them fine tales, humorous in conception and execution, with a sure and easy movement—they are simply latter-day folk tales made or retold by a scholar who had the art of story-telling. None but would enjoy them, though they are not very well known. These are the best memorial of William Maginn, a name darkly familiar to all in Mangan's poem, one of the many brilliant wits flung up by a benighted nation, and who have squandered their genius in the metropolis of London.



# ASSONANCE AND MODERN IRISH POETRY

By J. Patrick Byrne

WHAT is it brings man to poetry but sound—lilt of nursery rhymes, play governed by rhyming ritual, the pathos or gaiety of songs? And, apart from that inherent rhythm without which verse is not, what lures but the music of harmonizing words that match and echo each other in alliteration or consonance, assonance or rhyme? Rhyme dominant as in the anonymous:

Hey nonny no !  
Men are fools that wish to die !  
Is't not fine to dance and sing  
When the bells of death do ring ?  
Is't not fine to swim in wine,  
And turn upon the toe,  
And sing hey nonny no !  
When the winds blow and the seas flow ?  
Hey nonny no !

There is as much music in assonance as there is in rhyme, but it is not the same kind. No matter how cunningly rhyme be concealed it is far more insistent in its beat than the whisper of vowels inlaid in "the secret joinery of song"—vowels that sound gently but persistently till they permeate the whole. Listen to a verse from Austin Clarke's "The Planter's Daughter":

When night stirred at *sea*  
And the fire brought a *crowd* in,  
They say that her beauty  
Was music in *mouth*  
And few in the *candlelight*  
Thought her too *proud*,  
For the house of the *planter*  
Is known by the *trees*.

In this poem a vowel at each line-end answers the vowel in a word ending another line. Several lines finish with weak syllables. Imagine these dissyllabic endings as pure rhymes; the entire hushed atmosphere of the poem were inevitably ruined. There would be a more obvious music: a fife and drum band swinging along the road makes more obvious music than a girl singing in the dusk.

James Stephens has said, "a thought is as shy as a virgin," upon whom we may not look unless she be fittingly apparelled. Thought's raiment must be woven always of words, and when thought becomes poetry her dress must be a seamless garment of rhythm. This vesture may be most variously styled: the stately drapery of blank verse, or the airy gaiety of the light lyric where bright vowels flash and sparkle as the poem moves. Generally rhyme is an ornament superimposed upon poetry's vesture, as embroidery; while assonance may be so made an integral part of the fabric that without it the garment would be nothing, the very fabric could not be—and poetry, being shy, dare not appear.

In many instances this ornament rhyme takes charge of sense, bending meaning to its exigencies, so that where "love" is met one knows that somewhere in the next few lines must inevitably come "above"—unless the versemaker use "move," or "rove," or some other non-rhyme such as marks the incompetent.

Whence this rhyme which has for so long been the principal adornment of English verse? From French, where rhyme first appeared about 1120? Or from Latin where, though abhorrent to writers of the classical period, rhyme appeared in Church hymns by the beginning of the fifth century? Or, from the Irish?

Naturally no absolute proof can be adduced, but it is probable that Celtic races gave Europe vowel correspondence, merging into rhyme as in Irish Gaelic poetry; passing it through Latin where the many identical endings made its adoption easy.

Gaelic bards had written, says Douglas Hyde in his monumental "Literary History of Ireland," "these verses, for instance, which Méve . . . pronounced over Cuchorb, her husband,

in the first century " (though of course in their present form they date from somewhat later). One verse of the original ran :

Mac Mogachoirb cheileas *clú*  
 Cun fearas *crú* thar a *gháibh*  
 Ail uas a Ligi—budh *liach*—  
 Baslaide *chliath* thar Cliú *Máil*.

Hyde translates, preserving the original pattern :

Mochorb's son of fiercest *fame*,  
 Known his *name* for bloody *toil*,  
 To his gory grave is *gone*,  
 He who *shone* o'er shouting *Moyle*.

Kindly King, who liked not lies,  
 Rash to rise to fields of *fame*,  
 Raven-black his brows of *fear*,  
 Razor-sharp his spear of *flame*.

And of a later date the Encyclopedia Britannica says :

Ultan's hymn on St. Brigit . . . was perhaps composed in the seventh century. Definite metrical laws had evidently been elaborated when this poem was written. The beat is iambic, but the natural accent of the words is rigidly observed. The long line consists of two units of five syllables. The rhymes are dissyllabic and perfect. Alliteration is always observed in the latter half of each line, and *assonances* are found knitting up the half lines.

Assonance is the chiming of vowels only—"rose : boat"—and while initial consonants may be similar or even the same—"beauty : bosom"—final consonants or syllables must differ. Never before deliberately practised to any great extent in English, though prominent in Gaelic, this chiming of the vowels is now being revived by Irish writers using the English tongue.

Consonance—as in "love : prove"—has always been favoured by the incompetent writer of English verse, or by the poetaster who could not find a required rhyme. Used regularly, as in Wilfrid Owen's :

Think how it wakes the *seeds*—  
 Woke, once, the clays of a cold *star*.  
 Are limbs so dear-achieved, are *sides*  
 Full-nerved—still warm—too hard to *stir* ?

something may be said for it. It is even possible that consonance better suits England's semi-Teutonic genius than the harmony of vowels, music tending to be obscured by the more forceful consonants. While in Romance languages the ear prefers vowel correspondence, in predominantly Teutonic tongues preference is given to consonants. In Spanish—both cultured poetry and folk verse—assonance is of far more importance than rhyme, and is preferred to it; but until recently assonantal verse attempted—even by so great a master as Heine—in German or English has failed of poetry's effect, the ear missing the customary beat of consonants.

To Irish ears this is not so. Since unknown ages we Gaels have used—together with consonantal equivalence, alliteration, and pure rhyme—assonance, all according to strict prosodical rule. With the destruction of the great Gaelic and Norman-Irish families in the seventeenth century the poet's schools were broken up, and the old, strictly classical bardic order vanished. However, newer, more popular writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries developed from the ruins of the old a poetry depending for much of its effect upon sheer sound; they emphasized vowel music until their work was too sweet in its magnificent harmony; they made beautiful, sensuous verse, using internal rhyme, initial and medial alliteration, and assonance, until the flood of music was so sweet and rich as to cloy. Hyde says of it:

The Gaelic poetry of the last two centuries both in Ireland and the Highlands is probably the most sensuous attempt ever made by man to convey music in words. It is absolutely impossible to convey the lusciousness of sound, richness of rhythm, and perfection of harmony. Scores upon scores of new and brilliant metres made their appearance . . .

But with the gradual decay of Gaelic from the seventeenth century on, poetry also decayed; and assonance, save for slight instinctive use in English verse written by men who yet felt in Gaelic, fell into neglect. Then the barren period of the early nineteenth century, and little but political rhetoric was written in Ireland.

Following the labours of Irish and Continental scholars who were gradually translating the wealth of poetry and imaginative



legend preserved in scores of manuscripts, came the "Celtic Twilight" with all its diffuse glamour. But Yeats at least taught Irish writers using English to subordinate politics, or patriotic and religious sentimentality, to expression of completely realized emotion in almost perfect verse. Since in 1899 he published "The Wind Among the Reeds," so much poetry has come out of Ireland that there is no important poet using English today but owes something to Yeats and those who came after.

In reaction to the "Twilight," however, some of our finest Irish poets using English now work to something approximating the old, strict rules, chiselling words to a cold intense beauty unmatched in any other poetry written in English. Even as Gaels of past ages developed the instrument of rhyme, today our experimenters substitute for it in much of their best work the more delicate instrument of assonance, with its infinite capability of variation. Our aim is what Æ called the "cold, hard, yet passionate realism" of mediaeval Irish poetry, expressed in poems of intense feeling, such as Clarke's "Celibacy":

On a brown isle of Lough Corrib,  
When clouds were bare as branch  
And water had been thorned  
By colder days, I sank  
In torment of her side;  
But still that woman stayed,  
For eye obeys the mind.

Bedraggled in the briar  
And grey fire of the nettle,  
Three nights, I fell, I groaned  
On the flagstone of help  
To pluck her from my body;  
For servant ribbed with hunger  
May climb his rungs to God. . . .

We have been guilty of too many harps and shamrocks, and lake isles, but no longer; and at our worst we did not

Splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comets' hair.

If we still narrate stories in verse we do not call it great poetry; nor do we write vague rhetoric about a future given

over to mob misrule in a communist Utopia, and call that great poetry. We recognize that poetry is personal, written only by the individual and for individuals, and that propaganda is not poetry. Patiently, slowly, we chisel in the quiet of mind, and when the silver tapping of mallet on steel and stone ceases chiming in the ear, mind's eye has beauty before it—and the recognition of beauty is emotion, which is the business of poetry.

Austin Clarke, exponent of the new school, translates the work of an anonymous mediaeval poet writing in a classic Gaelic metre, preserving so far as possible the original pattern of assonance :

Summer delights the *scholar*  
 With *knowledge* and *reason* :  
 Who is happy in *hedgerow*  
 Or *meadow* as *he* is ?

Paying no dues to the parish,  
 He argues in logic  
 And has no care of cattle  
 But a satchel and stick.

. . . . .  
 But in winter by the big fires  
 The ignorant hear his fiddle  
 And he battles on the chessboard  
 As the landlords bid him.

The tendency in English verse either to endstop each line, or to finish the majority with an accented syllable, inhibits the freedom of lyricism, which needs a flowing verse movement. This can to a great degree be gained by ending lines with dissyllables. But if these be rhymed the verse tends toward lightness and triviality, becoming nearly always a mere jingle ; while if, as in blank verse, there be no rhyme, too many feminine endings weaken the structure to merely rhythmic prose. Internal rhyme has a similar effect.

Assonance overcomes this difficulty. Endings may be dissyllabic, but as the sound correspondence is only on the accented—sometimes even on the unstressed—vowel and not also on consonants, sense of pattern is attained without unpleasant obviousness ; and, without in the least impairing its propriety

for serious matter, feminine endings help the verse to flow with greater spontaneity—as in “The Three-Cornered Field” by F. R. Higgins :

By a field of the crab-trees my love and I were walking  
And talking most sweetly to each other ;  
In the three-cornered field, O we walked in early autumn,  
And these were the words of my lover :

“ A poor scholar like me who never took to girling  
Finds book-knowledge such a bitter morsel—  
Yet were I a clergyman, wise in holy learning,  
O I’d make your wild beauty my gospel.”

Since then I never hear him, but soon O I’ll see him  
Just darken God’s doorway on a Sunday—  
Yes, darken God’s doorway as he darkened my reason  
And narrowed my daylight last summer.

So again by the crab-trees, the grass is lean with autumn  
Where again I’ll be waiting for my lover ;  
And while he’ll never know it with him I’ll go walking  
Although he is wed to another.

Another inconvenience of rhyme is that its use keeps from the tonic position in a line—the end—many words for which no rhyme exists ; and retains in that place many “ inevitable ” words which are the only rhymes available for frequently used words, thus weakening sense for sound. Assonance gives the poet an opportunity to use at his line-end many new, unhackneyed words.

At the same time it demands of him an ear more accurately attuned to true harmony, and that he be not satisfied with combinations of similar instead of identical vowels : in “ bat : star ” or “ seat : seer,” for instance, the vowels, differently affected by the following consonants, make the words better examples of dissonance than of assonance. A vowel is often so conditioned by the consonant immediately before or after it that the consonant must be considered part of the vowel ; “ barley ” may assonate with “ charming,” but hardly with “ chatter.”

It is generally better to follow each assonantal vowel at the line-end with a consonant : “ night ” and “ eye ” do not chord

so well as "night : while." This curb on use at the line-end of stresses ending in a bare vowel further differentiates assonantal verse from ordinary rhymed verse, giving an additional sense of newness.

Not all the younger Irishmen who strive for newness in poetry follow the same path. Cecil Day Lewis, Irishman born (1904), uses what he calls cross-assonance, but which is rather patterned internal rhyme, in some of his work :

*Now to be with you, elate, unshared,  
My kestrel joy, O hoverer in wind,  
Over the quarry furiously at rest  
Chaired on shoulders of shouting wind.*

Living in England he has suffered from environment, and is one of the triumvirate whose work is considered the vanguard of modern English poetry, as distinct from foreign poetry written in English. With no marked success Day Lewis tries using consonance without even vowel similarity :

*I'm a dreamer, so are you.  
See the pink sierras call,  
The ever-ever land of dew,  
Magic casements, fairy coal.  
There the youngest son wins through,  
Wee Willie can thrash the bully,  
Living's cheap and dreams come true ;  
Lying manna tempts the belly ;  
Crowns are many, claims are few.*

In his intriguing and arresting "A Hope for Poetry," Day Lewis acknowledges his debt to Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), Jesuit poet whose poems were not published until 1918. Hopkins made systematic use of both alliteration and assonance to run up a scale of vowel sounds, as in his "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo" :

*How to kéep—is there ány any, is there none such, nowhere  
known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, láce,  
latch or catch or key to keep  
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, . . . from  
vanishing away ?*

*—The Leaden Echo.*



. . . Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,  
 Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's  
 fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and  
 swiftly away with, done away with, undone,  
 Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and  
 dangerously sweet  
 Of us, the wimpled-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matchèd  
 face,  
 The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah !  
 to fleet,  
 Never fleets móre . . .

—*The Golden Echo.*

Many of his effects curiously anticipate Joyce's use of words in "Ulysses," and his misuse of them in "Work in Progress." But as "Ulysses," begun in 1914, started to appear in the "Little Review" for March 1918, which year saw Hopkins's poems first published, influence is unlikely. Nor—apart from Day Lewis—is it apparent that Hopkins as a technical innovator has influenced our other important younger Irish poets—though it is of interest to note he spent the last five years of his life teaching in Dublin's Catholic University.

In so early a poem as :

I hear an *army charging* upon the land,  
 And the *thunder* of horses *plunging*, foam about their  
*knees* :  
*Arrogant*, in *black armour*, behind them stand,  
 Disdaining the *reins*, with fluttering whips,  
 the *charioteers*.

—*Chamber Music* (1907).

Joyce uses final assonance in conjunction with rhyme—rather successfully, though it is often unwise to use both, since rhyme by its consonants may kill the lighter, more delicate assonance. Some of our younger poets—Frank O'Connor, for instance—use a good deal of this combination, and in many cases this objection applies.

The rondeau, ballade, villanelle—artificial forms—make great use of identical rhyme to tie together an entire poem. That is too much ; the effect is meretricious, jingly. However, while repeated or internal rhyme lightens the verse line, internal

assonance on identical or closely related vowels helps keep the atmosphere proper to the poem ; with assonance the same vowel can be made to predominate through a stanza—even through an entire poem—without becoming monotonous :

As the grey air grows darker on grass-hidden water  
And black otters bark at the talking of starlings,  
We've walked, O my darling, so far through the valley  
That shadows are quenching each star.

Here even, my dearest, earth trembles in stillness ;  
And between hill and weir and the green breadth of mearings  
Lean death makes a clearing, while nearer the hearthstone  
The child leaves the sweet breast in fear. . . .

—*F. R. Higgins*

("The Inn of the Dead Men.")

One use of this property of assonance is to build an assonantal scheme around the tonic vowel of the most important personal or place name.

In his own notes to "Collected Poems" (Allen & Unwin 1936) Austin Clarke states :

Assonance is more elaborate in Gaelic than in Spanish poetry. In the simplest forms the tonic word at the end of the line is supported by an assonance in the middle of the next line. The use of internal pattern of assonance in English, though more limited in its possible range, changes the pivotal movement of the lyric stanza. In some forms of the early syllabic Gaelic metres only one part of a double syllable word is used in assonance, a system also found in the Spanish ballad metres, and this can be a guide to experiment in partial rhyming or assonance and muting. For example, rhyme or assonance on or off accent, stopped rhyme (*e.g.* *window* : *thin* ; *horn* : *morning*), harmonic rhyme (*e.g.* *hero* : *window*), cross-rhyme, in which the separate syllables are in assonance or rhyme. The use, therefore, of polysyllabic words at the end of the lyric line makes capable a movement common in continental languages such as Italian or Spanish. . . . Assonance is a complete medium and capable of development, but fails, through excess, if merely used as an addition to ordinary rhyme. . . .

Though combination of assonance and rhyme is not invariably disastrous, generally the two have separate provinces. Assonance is not at its best in a ballad telling out its bare tale with no psychological overtones. But for the secret, introspective poem that follows the twisting ways of mind back beyond thought, it is unequalled.

Poetry is the concentrated but adequate rhythmic distillation, into words, of intense emotion ; its adequacy may be measured by the reader's intensity of reaction. While emotional intensity is the primary requisite, poetry's efficacy is conditioned by its mode of expression. True poetry is dateless, current coin in any age, so that what was poetry to Homer or Solomon, to Amergin or Oisín, is poetry today. However, since the first poet discovered that deliberately arranged and balanced sounds expressing emotion can call up corresponding reactions in another, and made use of the incantation that is poetry, the accepted external form of verse has varied greatly from land to land, people to people.

We Gaels, whose race gave Europe that rhyme which has rung in its poetry for fifteen hundred years, and who today are re-establishing on Europe's western marches our ancient language, may well find in this new-old technique the proper vehicle for our poetry.

To the poet able to handle it, assonance opens a road midway between the strictures of rhyme with its almost unavoidable use of the hackneyed, and the looseness of "free verse"—which is generally not verse and but seldom poetry. In return for freedom in this direction, however, it demands a verse content that is purely poetic ; a lean, austere line stripped of all unnecessary verbiage, so that the pattern of the completed poem becomes an inevitable thing grown out of the poem's very self. While a mediocre concept shrined in technically faultless prosody may pass muster, he who would use assonance successfully must have "the stark diction of the poet too great to mince his words" ; and his must be poems "in which a figure or a situation of passion is realized with an absolute and final intensity."

## RELIGIOUS VISION

THERE was, once upon a time, a quite notable age when, in our history, the people had remarkably frequent off-days from work. These were the church's holidays. The folk had souls to save, but it was agreed that they also had minds and bodies to enjoy diversion. As we discover—from the things they left behind them—they had a sheer delight in the lively pleasure of the eye. So their religious worship became a splendour of ceremonial drama, a ritual mime, rather than the agony of logic chopping with which the schismatics and heretics replaced—or offered to replace—it. Before that came into debate, holidays were holy and jolly.

And then, as old Bishop Corbet wrote, with the old abbeys fled, too, rewards and fairies. Something exquisitely elusive slipped away. With the revival of classical learning the new and enterprising men of affairs of the Renaissance brought in also, the old pagan ruin. It broke the hearts as well as the lives of those who had lived in, and loved, the dignity and wisdom that had flowered to a significant style under the growth of the christian tradition. The Gothic fane fell as old Rome was reborn; resurrected from classic graves came a cold heathen fury.

Thereafter came another century of curious revival, between pagan renaissance and the age of reason. That was the intermediary seventeenth century, the time of the divine right of kings, of republics, of standing armies well drilled, and the bourgeois gentleman. It was an age of real transition and one figure amongst artists summated it. He had inherited his aesthetic principles from the Hellenistic world, through Byzantium, for he came from the more than Greek island of Crete. In his adopted country of Spain he was called *El Greco*, despite his apprenticeship to painting in Italy. He had, however, the essentially imaginative religious outlook belonging to the new day's acuity in personal consciousness. He was the true link between the age of faith and the days of protest: both reacted in him.

He had passed all his career amongst the triumphant exponents of the rapidly developing art of painting in oil. The technique of the Venetians he had learned from the giants of the prime, Titian and the rest. But the gods and goddesses left over from Graeco-Roman times were not for his brush. He was a Greek of the empire that survived, holding by the culture which Constantine's eastern capital and instituted as Christian in the great reaction from pagan Rome.

Into the intense fury of physical movement and colour which Tintoretto had revealed to an astonished world, Greco strove to project the formal principle and traditional iconography of religious symbol that had been the essence of eastern painting during so many generations. More, even, than that, for instead of a flaming illumination, descending or pouring from a super-intense and thunder-charged heaven, he depicted a permeating flow of light throughout his pictures. It was vibrant luminosity, expanding from the very midst of things, which he revealed in the characteristic cool radiance of his work. In design he kept to



earlier simplicities and traditional principle for strength to sustain his creative self-revelation.

The whole new flood of classical learning had been sounded and explored when the sixteenth century reached towards its end. All that the cultural revolution had worked out in the cities of Venice, Florence and Rome, through the interplay of adventurous wealth from traders, the imagination of scholars and the liberality of kings and pontiffs, had developed an expert ease in the technique of the arts and had increased the range of available materials. In fact, the resources of the swiftly developing civilization had elaborated a prodigious facility in most things. There was, too, a diffusion of the power and wealth once concentrated in the hands of the church and the great rulers. A new kind of prosperity was in being. The middlemen's profits began to be of most real significance in finance. The trader and his money-gains outweighed the balance once held by the landed proprietor. The notable generality began to lose ground to the commonplace particular. Thus came a continuing Luxury spread all about, and peculiar freedom of opinions came with the ever broader dispersal of print.

Moreover, the deific classical subjects, long used for large decoration, lost interest. Their pagan beauty had, for a while, usurped the previous mural compositions representing piety, benignity, nobility, and all virtue and vice, in their Christian aspect. Robust, rich and vigorous as it had asserted itself, nevertheless, it soon declined before the new protests and the more exacting demand for hard fact. Across the mind of the age swept the assertions that truth lay in measure and number, and art came through observation of nature. Of course, some few still felt that plain fact was inadequate to express their vision, pious and passionate artists in whom imagination burned, whose desirous vision was not toward objective records, posed and copied from external nature.

The splendour of pigment had been opened to exploration by the new proved advantage of canvas stretched and prepared: a resilient surface upon which the brush sprang with powerful calligraphy, stroke upon stroke. Energy in form could be attained with a weight of colour-impasto that had not before been feasible. It began to be possible to explore warmth and richness in the luminosity of the very stuff of colour. Light was not alone upon, but in the very pigment suspended in translucent oil.

Gone now were the ideals of beauty as a marmoreal divinity, the high and noble fantasies of a philosophic art such as Leonardo da Vinci or Michael Angelo had conceived. Even the overwhelming throes and torments of the heroically moulded beings that succeeded on their overly noble composition soon failed to satisfy the fresh acute intelligence which called, insistently, for a salvation out of the new self-consciousness. Death, and life also, had become more bitter with the livelier apprehension due to wider knowledge and the dissemination of books. Reading had revealed itself as a drug titillating introspection.

Out of the exacerbated conscience of the time a multitude of souls sought a more sure salvation. They wanted a surer conviction than lay in ritual and formal absolution. The peoples strove within themselves and cried out for a clear way of life. No authority, whether sacerdotal or royal, possessed the universal word. Another understanding of the divine passion had come into being. It began to be declared in religion by the mystics, in politics by the

republican ideal of the commonwealth. In art there came the terrible thrill of emotional appeal, lifted by El Greco to reveal the holiness of the imagination.

He showed the world a traditional design revitalised and free-flowing, a composition of ascent and descent, upstriving, down-stooping. Gone was the athletic frenzy of the vulgarer decorators, for him the puerile gods had passed. The slaves of diviner desires were in the way to be pictured, the god sought was nearer the heart. A vaunting truth was not to be expressed in superhuman physical magnificence any more. Sickness of mind and thought, and weakness of body was no longer beneath the interest of the most distinguished art. Intelligence and imagination were seeking and finding new facts and astounding fancies, inside the mind as well as in nature outside.

The summation of the vain splendour of life and its perfection of outward array was manifest enough in Van Dyck. For the elegants, the exquisites of gentry and nobility he had all the ease and charm desirable; his narrow world contained perfection. On the other hand, the robust violence of Rubens had something lurking in it of that haunting glamour of light which came, not only out of natural effect, but from the mind's eye. His figures were possessed by a passion which too often swept away the poise and courtly dignity of high lords and ladies. A wind of the spirit, coarsened yet urgent, shook those draperies and gave a queer fire to glances. Not only Pan's satyrs and nymphs disported there, for his painted vision could display the pale agony of mind at the Descent from the Cross or the hurtling torrent of demon-dragged flesh in the Fall of the Damned.

It still remained for Rembrandt in the north of Europe to seize upon the solution absolute of solid flesh in a disintegrating vision. For him, when his judgment had found true balance, the mystery of flesh, its subtle colour and living translucence was the ever-present problem. It evaded him often, though his questioning was deep-searching as the surgeon's scalpel or the butcher's cleaver. His sight thrust itself against surfaces, holding and moulding shape and quality as with hands. So the painted flesh, warm and red-blooded, thrilled into its moment of sensitive revelation, once and again, for him as for no other. Time moved athwart his long strife of living as he records himself in his self-portraits. There is evermore a deeper knowledge evinced as we see him, older and wearier, a poor man for all the riches he had embalmed in the loaded pigment.

Vermeer too, for his part, had poised the light of interiors with a faultless judgment and clarity upon the walls, the garments, the furnishings and the withdrawn attention of self absorbed women in Holland. All that was in his pictures lived in its own light, naught had a place beyond its perfect relation to the rest. He expressed a strange everyday perfection, a flow of luminous quiet in a rich satisfaction and content. Jan Steen, de Hooch and others of the day and land were, in little, of the same order but ever more and more affected by a multitude of business and the urgency of setting so much of the world in little room.

Nevertheless, at Delft, Vermeer the Dutchman had paralleled the easy quiet and dignity that Velasquez revealed in his princely painting of the court of All the Spains, with an art of similar nobility among the bourgeois folk of Holland. Pictorial art had fallen, in that age, a vast reserve of interest in life and its expression in design; there was a general joy in discovery. Yet, for all that, it was in Spain that the greater revelation declared itself. From his

own day until our century, the overwhelming power of El Greco has been little appreciated. Although Rembrandt, with a not dissimilar point of principle (yet with a very different expression of it) long ago found a wide, though posthumous, interest.

Both, in their composition, used a central focus of light, away and out from which all forms receded. But the Hollander's stolid forms and static arrangement rarely ventured into the apocalyptic transmutation of El Greco's design. In the Toledan painter's hands the scheme of traditional arrangement of sacred subject, iconographic and geometrical, was turned into a means of dynamic vision by illumination. Perhaps only so stabilised, by a traditional hidebound method of structural arrangement, could the rage of his earth-quaking, heaven-shaking imagination order itself and endure expression. The world of reality split and opened upon itself in waves, flowering in the fiery intensity of his quest for self-statement. The christian spirit of the first age of pure belief was for his moment revived, to be seen, perhaps, for the last time. Every figure and object was enwrapped and permeated with curious ardent clarity, a ritual of re-creation of light informed the whole work.

The exhibition of seventeenth century paintings at Burlington House reveals the occurrence of the problem of lighting among artists of that age. Although the selection has been confined to English collections and, consequently, has definite limitations, the trend becomes apparent. Apart from the admirable collection of drawings where the development of academic mastery shows itself among wide-ranging experiments in subject matter, the search for means in adjustment of lighting to fortify the frequently banal and commonplace subject enlivens an otherwise customary type of gallery painting. For that is what makes up the generality of country-house pictures shown. A group of figures about a lighted candle was a not unusual manifestation of a new inquiry into the pictorial uses of luminosity.

Amongst them are, of course, two great masterpieces revealing illumination as their outstanding and even essential quality. The self-portrait of Rembrandt as an old man reveals at first glance a weary and coarsened face, boldly, even roughly painted. Yet profound in control of all significant structure, the ruthlessly built up paint shows the artist's age-thickened features, wearied with living: the sad flesh gazing forth out of a curious serene effulgence. By its own light, shining in the midst of a many coloured darkness it lives, an utterly intangible witness to the subtle being of thought.

Set over against the Rubens' equestrian Duke of Buckingham, which superbly celebrates a triumph of prancing pride in the world and the flesh, stands afar, the enormous and astonishing Nativity of El Greco, borrowed from Roumania. It is naive rather than accomplished, so terrific is its preoccupation with the directest expression. Each figure, every part of the composition, is set in its own ambient, painted with a light and shade of its own, absolutely relative to the rest, but for all that detached.

The whole arrangement seems assembled with a child-like inconsequence, yet each figure falls into place with a natural sense of hazard, all is controlled, enfolded, exalted by the general illumination. The light springs and permeates, a central glow, cool and mystically transmutative in its eternal fresh surprise. Here is the word of the dream beyond the dream, the queerly real, something



afa, Greco never loses the sense of being in a true world and a real life, he reveals its state, touching it, handling it, shewing it forth. The sacred thing is there with him, offered to us to see and even to question.

His period was haunted by a sense of the strangeness in life and the slightness of human contact with its full reality. Sir Thomas Browne saw a wonder in its mystery and John Donne too. Their magical words hint to us the marvel which El Greco's long-faced, hollow-cheeked saints and shepherds and nobles reveal in their gazing flesh and gesture, while, in agonized ecstasy of contemplation, they are translated into a state beyond physical bound to find the supreme essence of being.

Perhaps Leonardo, too, at an earlier day had conveyed that sense of a central quiet, of spiritual vision in the midst of an intensely moving and passion stirred surrounding. But with him the stress of emotion revealed itself in the strange tormented forms of the landscape about intense and inward-smiling faces. Placid figures reposed amid the tormented and splintered shapes of ice and basalt. Something of the dread immobility of the scrutiny of science had fallen on his thought, a nirvana state—fused out of good and evil.

Once in a while the antithetical genius of Rubens flings upon a panel a golden heaven of life-impassioned figures whose ruddy glory has the shudder of that intangible central flame and fire, radiant with the interior marvel of the light of imagination. But most it is obscured by the robust formula of the picture manufacturer. Since those days hardly another but William Blake has, in complete sincerity, sought those sources of light. He flung into his design great-limbed figures, muscular and tormented, desperately seeking the freedom of composition which had been so easy in Italy before. But the convention had long hardened. Rarely could his imagination break through the rigid method to fill his drawing with the power and enlightenment of his Sons of God. Still his Nelson with Leviathan reveals the darkling fire that shook and shuddered through those uncertain but disturbing last designs for Dante's Vision.

Heterodox as he was, religious subject was the sole one of significance to him. Rarely in life did he find what Greco caught so easily because a tradition, in his day, was yet alive. They both, however, knew the way and the illumination which mystical writers, in whose heart such vision flamed, called the Inward Light. No doubt it is the phrase best made to describe the living flood of illumination in Greco and also equally the serene, inward-litten glow and introspective wonder of the Rembrandt portrait. There is a state of mind in such painting which profoundly informs the play of tone and light in the pigments. It may be that the painters found out for the visionaries what it was that they wanted to say. Absorbed in the wonder and glory of light, which, after all, is indeed the seer?



# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

## NEW ASPECTS OF BOOK-COLLECTING.

By *M. J. MacManus*

UNDER the general title of *Aspects of Book-collecting*, Messrs. Constable have published a series of booklets which, at the attractive price of two shillings each, should become widely popular.

*Collecting Yellowbacks* is Mr. Michael Sadleir's theme and it is one that he handles with rare knowledge and enthusiasm. The railway bookstall fiction of the second half of the nineteenth century had little repute in its own day beyond that which came from cheapness, and he would have been a rash or far-seeing man who prophesied that it would ever become collectors' treasure-trove. Yet this very thing is beginning to happen. Yellow-backs are making an appeal, chiefly by reason of their quaint and picturesque qualities, which somehow stamp them as the very essence of Victorianism. But they must not be ragged or battered; collectors desire only such copies as have, by some miracle, withstood the assaults of time upon their colourful but all-too-fragile bindings. Here Mr. Sadleir tells all, or nearly all, that need be known about them.

Two such divergent subjects as *Collecting Detective Fiction* and *Publishers' Cloth, 1820-1900*, are in the capable hands of Mr. John Carter. Crime fiction is heavily "collected" nowadays, and non-enthusiasts will learn with some surprise that its literary form is nearly a hundred years old. Some of Poe's tales and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* would, of course, attract collectors who care nothing for detective stories, but it is interesting to remember that they mark the beginnings of the literature of crime and detection. Mr. Carter treats the whole subject more than readably. He also makes what might seem a dull topic—the evolution of binding cloth—quite fascinating, as he records the great change-over from "boards" to cloth, the early experimentation with fabrics, the failures and the successes, and the final stabilisation of the medium. The size of this booklet is in inverse ratio to the amount of research that it must have entailed.

Will serial stories ever attract collectors? It seems rather doubtful, if physical difficulties are taken into consideration. Yet, logically, they are the "first" editions. It is no easy problem that Mr. Graham Pollard faces in *Serial Fiction*, but he faces it boldly, and sets a headline for collectors. Many novels differ materially in serial form from the books which they became later,

"The serial issue," says Mr. Pollard, "is not only the real first printing, but its illustrations and its differences from the final text may sometime throw a vivid light on the original form from which the story developed. Why then is it so rarely noted in the bibliographies and hardly ever found on the collector's shelves?" The last part of Mr. Pollard's question is undoubtedly easier to answer than the first.

With Mr. Oldham we are in the midst of problems which trouble only a small minority of collectors. Bibliophiles have been inclined to differentiate sharply between music—that is "published" music—and literature, and it is only in very recent years that first editions of the great masters have entered the sphere of book-collecting. Here, again, is a fascinating new world and one whose importance is being accorded a growing recognition. Mr. Oldham is thoroughly at home with his subject and sets pointers for those whose approval is bound to be groping and tentative. Even if he is obliged, by reasons of space, to touch on little more than general principles, he has done an excellent piece of pioneer work.

*Collecting Yellowbacks.* By Michael Sadleir.

*Collecting Detective Fiction.* By John Carter.

*Publishers' Cloth, 1820-1900.* By John Carter.

*Serial Fiction.* By Graham Pollard.

*Collecting Musical First Editions.* By C. B. Oldham. [Constable, 2s. each].

# BOOK REVIEWS

## SURREALISM

THE RISE OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN, 1791-94. By Rosamond Jacob. Illustrated. Harrap. 12s. 6d.

The United Irish movement has profoundly influenced the history of modern Ireland. It altered the course of events both in its own day and long afterwards. Its legacy is still with us. Its ultimate effects may have yet to be experienced.

The Irishman whose capital city is Belfast is as proud of the men of that movement as are his countrymen who look to Dublin. To the northerner the United Irishmen are an undying testimony to the courage and the nobility of his ancestors. While political considerations may have brought him to hold diametrically opposite views, the northerner will yield to no one in his admiration for those men who did so much to make their city a centre of vigorous intellectual activity.

Miss Rosamond Jacob has chosen to write on a subject which is therefore of interest to every Irishman who is sufficiently concerned with the events of to-day to appreciate the influence of the past. It is nearly a century since the appearance of the first volume of Madden's biographies of the United Irishmen, and more than fifty years since Lecky began his intensive studies into the same period. A popular account of this movement, embodying the results of the researches of these great historians, is long overdue.

*The Rise of the United Irishmen*, which virtually ends with the suppression of their societies in 1794, cannot be regarded as a mere popular account whose interest might only be an ephemeral one. The author follows the chronological plan which Lecky apparently adopts in treating of this movement. She has made an independent study of the printed sources in Madden's *United Irishmen*, the autobiography of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the published statements of the organisation which appear in the rare pamphlet, *Society of United Irishmen of Dublin* (1794), the published materials relating to Thomas Addis Emmet, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, and Dr. William Drennan, and lastly she has utilised to some extent *The Northern Star*, the paper of the Belfast society, which was forcibly suppressed in 1797.

There is, however, a considerable amount of unexplored manuscript material on the subject in the Public Record Office London (particularly in the Home Office papers), in the papers relating to 1798 in Dublin Castle, in the Madden MSS. (in one instance Miss Jacob makes use of these), and the Wolfe Tone MSS. in Trinity College, Dublin. Nowadays the investigation of manuscript material is usually left to professional historians, as the examination of unedited historical material demands a scientific training. For similar reasons the documents printed by the British Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, and the handling of newspaper material, is rarely regarded as within the province of the non-professional writer. A good illustration of the use to which such material can be put is afforded by Rev. Dr. Patrick Rogers's *The Irish Volunteers and Catholic Emancipation*. Dr. Rogers was trained in the school of history in Queen's University of Belfast. In parenthesis, it may be noted that Miss Jacob would have found this work of much value. Apart, however, from *The Northern Star* (already referred to) the present authoress has made but little use of the newspaper

material ; but it must be remembered that Miss Jacob, from the nature of her interest in this subject, has been perfectly justified in excluding such material from her purview.

One of the great advantages of the book is the reproduction of valuable original documents or of their most salient parts. Miss Jacob thereby distinguishes clearly between her own views and those of the people of whom she treats. By this she again can claim that her book has more than a popular appeal. The student is thereby enabled to obtain, in a readily accessible form, the material on which he can base his own conclusions. The general reader can visualise, better than through any modern verbal transformation, the actions and incidents which moved the United Irishmen to make their various pronouncements.

It was inevitable, perhaps, that Miss Jacob should select the narrative method of presentation. In this she followed the mode favoured by Lecky (although occasionally she discusses documents out of their proper chronological order), but a broader view of the great historical scheme would have revealed the essentially analytical nature of his method. In treating of the United Irishmen, for example, Lecky endeavours to connect together the events of each short composite period and to show the influence of various forces upon one another. In the present case an analytical treatment would have yielded valuable information on the working of the individual United Irish societies, the development of their political, social, and economic ideas, the rate at which they increased in influence, the varying effects of successive events on their ideas, the gradual development of the government's attitude, and above all the influence of internal and external political and economic forces on every aspect of the subject. The narrative method, however, enables the proper sequence to be readily remembered and for a popular exposition is most effective.

In the criticism of sources and of events Miss Jacob is both vigorous and original. Too often the student of history is content to accept the opinions and judgments of Lecky, so thorough and scientific seems his investigation of this period. Miss Jacob, however, has the additional advantage that she brings to her subject a sympathy which is foreign to Lecky. To the latter the political outlook of Grattan is preferable to that of any other individual or party in this period. The democratic and revolutionary ideas, which developed in the United Irish societies, repelled him, and despite his high standard of historical integrity and impartiality one cannot feel that Lecky regards Wolfe Tone and his colleagues with that sympathy which has enabled him to see so clearly into the character and aims of Grattan. It is only just to admit that the United Irishmen are to Miss Jacob what Grattan was to Lecky. This is particularly so in regard to their attitude towards the Catholic population, to whom Miss Jacob, with the enthusiasm of a devoted Gaelic revivalist, gives the monopoly of the term Irishman. It should here be mentioned that the author's own political beliefs, so largely influenced by the doctrines of the United Irishmen, have tended to obscure her vision of the political world of the eighteenth century. The principle of equality, and the rights of man (and of woman) were so far from being standards of excellence at that time that those who favoured such notions were regarded with no more toleration than is nowadays afforded to anarchists. It is not on our standards but on their own that the men of the eighteenth century must stand or fall.



A study of the United Irishmen is in many ways a dangerous introduction to the history of their period. The French Revolution created a great gulf between the *ancien régime* and the world in which we live to-day. The ideas of the United Irishmen were largely inspired by those which brought about that great movement, and thus there is a gulf too between them and their own English and Irish contemporaries and predecessors. We cannot condemn the Belfast volunteers who assisted in dispossessing the resisting tenants of an evicting landlord. The rule of law lay heavily on their consciences, and the first glimmers of justice in national affairs had only begun to enter their minds with the rebellion of the American colonists.

Another consequence of Miss Jacob's specialised study has been her failure to give proper attention to recognised authorities in kindred subjects. To rely on John Mitchel for a proper understanding of Irish history is to put a severe handicap on oneself. Mitchel regarded eighteenth century events through the eyes of a militant nineteenth century nationalist. The great lesson which history teaches us is that every generation is the product of all preceding generations and the corollary is that history must never be studied in cross section. The circumstances which led to Henry VIII to abjure the pope caused the dissolution of the English monasteries, whose lands passed into the possession of a body of men whose descendants took the throne from Charles I and secured the permanent control of government under William III. The same circumstance caused the persecution of Catholicism in England and in Ireland and drove the Old Foreigners into the arms of the Gael; a new English interest was in consequence created by the Cromwellian settlement of Ireland, which was maintained by Charles II and William III, and was a direct cause for the imposition of the later penal laws. Complete emancipation for the Catholics was denied to them as long as the Irish parliament existed, because Lord Chancellor Fitzgibbon and others like him convinced the landed interest that a Catholic majority would undo that land settlement. To prevent it the Union was brought about, and not until the landed interest was rooted out could Protestant as well as Catholic Ireland look with equanimity on repeal. With exceptions like Lord Edward Fitzgerald, there were few landed men in the United Irish movement, and this explains their readiness to adopt the revolutionary principle of equality and their voicing of Catholic claims. Miss Jacob has written a most stimulating book, and our only regret is that her subject has not been presented in its proper historical perspective.

R. DUDLEY EDWARDS

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THE PHENIX FLAME: a study of Fenianism and John Devoy. By Desmond Ryan. Arthur Barker. 10s. 6d.

Mr. Desmond Ryan has made himself a reputation by his studies of the outstanding figures in the modern Irish nationalist movement. His interests are not those of the historian or the biographer. Rather, it would seem, he is the interpreter and to some extent the chronicler of a movement in which he himself has played a part. We may not agree with some of his judgments

nor with some of his *obiter dicta*, but we reverently salute this zealous Irish evangelist in *partibus infidelibus*.

*The Phoenix Flame* is really a study of the political life of John Devoy in its proper historical perspective. The first part of the book, which commences in prologue with a glimpse of Wolfe Tone delivering his immortal speech from the dock, is concerned with the conditions which brought about the Ireland of 1850—O'Connell, Young Ireland, famine, rebellion, tenant right—and how these things shaped Fenianism and influenced John Devoy. There is nothing new here to the student of Irish history but much to be learnt by that public, whether in England or in Ireland, which hesitates to take up any volume published before the Great War. The Ireland into which the Fenian movement was introduced is made vivid in these pages, not as an antiquarian relic, but as the precursor of the revolutionary Ireland of yesterday. The interests Mr. Ryan emphasises are those which brought about that revolution. The name "Fenian" proclaimed the tradition to which the associates looked. Tone had given them a political gospel, Davis a historic culture. The modern scholar might smile at O'Mahony's notions of a critical edition of Keating, but the average Irishman might well aspire to the cultural attainments of those first Fenians. The Irish revolutionary of yesterday might have regarded his own organisation as undoubtedly superior, but the Fenian legend created him and the Ireland of to-day. When the final history of Fenianism is written, its author will owe a debt to Desmond Ryan.

The origins of the movement have yet to be systematically explored. Mr. Ryan contents himself by tracing the careers of James Stephens in Paris and of John O'Mahony in America. Stephens's associations with continental secret societies is referred to, and it is pointed out that, while he and others had no desire to introduce such organisations into Ireland, the knowledge of their activities was to have unfortunate reactions on the attitude to Fenianism of the leaders of the Irish Catholic Church. John O'Mahony, the guileless idealist and student, admitted spies into his own confidences and into close association with him. Into this setting is introduced "the greatest of the Fenians." "Patrick Pearse, as he passed the great Fenians in review, declared James Stephens was cold and enigmatical, John O'Leary chivalrous and scholarly, O'Donovan Rossa perhaps the most understandable and typical of all the Fenians, but John Devoy was the greatest of them."

The remainder of the book is concerned with the Fenian movement as it centred round Devoy. Especially memorable is the chapter describing the judicial trials of 1865, which marked yet another stage in the political education of national Ireland. Tone and Emmet had spoken from the dock to an Ireland bludgeoned into insensibility. O'Connell had galvanised this down-trodden people into a nation of constitutional fighters. Mitchel had proclaimed with his pen that defiance of English law which thrilled the countryside, but his gospel was soon forgotten in the horrors of starvation and the anti-climax of Ballinacorney. Now, for the first time, Ireland was to hear in open court the challenge to English rule and the taunts to English judges which told the world that a new phase in Ireland's struggle had begun. The defiant prisoners exerted a profound moral influence on contemporary Ireland, and directly prepared the way for the land struggle and the twentieth century War of Independence.

Mr. Ryan proceeds to show the influence of Devoy on the later history of Fenianism. He commenced the war in the gaols, of which it is said "Fenianism in chains above all proved more powerful than Fenianism in the field." Afterwards there was America and a new chapter in the lifelong fight for Ireland, which was henceforth to be waged by organisation and by the pen. The quarrels of the later years are given their due place, without palliation of faults, but with a sympathy which enables Mr. Ryan to see the work of John Devoy in its proper perspective, and so to point out that, even when his work had fallen to others, and he had become apparently an obstructionist (there are those who would regard the qualifying word as superfluous), he remained a living monument to the national tradition. Even those he injured must be thankful that he lived to write *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*.

In its later stages this description of a giant in the national struggle passes into the realm of contemporary impressions. Mr. Ryan writes with the pen of an onlooker and the feelings of a participant. This gives his narrative an additional value. But if the struggle has left its mark on him too, in a manner which may appear occasionally in these pages, his critics must accord him a little of that toleration that he has taught us to exercise in judging John Devoy.

R. DUDLEY EDWARDS

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A HISTORY OF IRELAND. By Edmond Curtis. Third Edition. Revised and Enlarged. Methuen. 12s. 6d.

This fine book was first published in 1936, and was reviewed in this magazine in the July-September number of that year. It was received everywhere with a chorus of praise which would have turned the head of anybody else but its modest author. It is good to know that it is now in its third edition, an edition which comes with various small printers' errors corrected in the body of the book, and with various improvements and additions, chief of which is the expansion of the last two chapters, dealing with the period from the Famine to the Treaty.

A reading of this new edition confirms fully the impression created by the first edition. It is a magnificent book, of permanent value, which stands out in our historical literature with the work of Lecky, Mrs. Green, John MacNeill, and George O'Brien, and it has a distinctiveness which none of these have, in that, while they deal just as admirably with special periods, Professor Curtis covers our whole history. It is quite clearly the best one-volume history of Ireland which has been written, and it would be difficult to overpraise its impartiality, its admirable tone, its marshalling of facts and its unerring establishment of salient facts, and above all its vision of Ireland as a whole and its perception, at all times, of the spiritual Irish Nation, which was behind every age. To the Irish historical student, it is an indispensable book and to the general reader it is a revelation which will whet his appetite for more.

In deference to various expressed desires, the author has taken advantage of this new edition to rewrite and enlarge the modern chapters, the period from the Famine now running to 41 pages instead of 19. This has enabled a fuller, and

a most admirable, treatment of this period, and in particular the account of that great man Charles Stewart Parnell is most just and striking. The enlarged space allows also for fuller treatment of the specifically modern developments which began with the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893. The bibliography is enlarged, and the value of the book to the student is much increased by this, and by a glossary and a list of significant dates in Irish history.

Professor Curtis is fortunate. His predecessors had to end with Ireland still in captivity, but he has been enabled, the first historian, to write of the end of the captivity, of the "Risn' of the Moon."

P. S. O'HEGARTY.

THE SECRET LANGUAGES OF IRELAND. By R. A. Stewart Macalister. Cambridge. 16s. net.

Prof. Macalister possesses the rare gift of finding expression for the wealth of his learning in a striking felicity of phrase which is always at the service of an overflowing humour. So that the wayfarer receiving instruction takes a huge delight therein. The scholarly book before me is a further illustration of this fact. From cover to cover *The Secret Languages of Ireland* is a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. It is offered to the public with the accustomed elegance which the Cambridge University Press has taught us always to expect from it.

The origin of the work is set forth in the Introduction. We are told that mainly it is based upon the relics of John Sampson's industry and that he was one of the world's greatest authorities on the Gypsies. In all probability had the language known as Shelta not been discovered by C. G. Leland, acquired by J. Sampson, and scientifically studied by Kuno Meyer, this volume would never have seen the light. With the special emphasis which is laid on Shelta we should have expected the opening chapters to have dealt with that language: chronology decided otherwise and Ogham claims attention first.

Just about the middle of the last century J. Windele (to whose pioneer researches Dr. Macalister by the way makes not the smallest reference) wrote the following words which might well be applied to our author's first two chapters: "When these inscriptions shall be collected in their entirety, and when the competent translator—the profound scholar, conversant with their language in its most archaic form—shall give us their truthful meaning, they will then speak their own history, and doubtless tell a tale but little in accordance with the vain imaginings of dreaming visionaries, past or present." It was known even in Windele's day that the Ogham was a language confined to persons of the Druidical order, but Prof. Macalister is able to assure us that the druids in an Ultonian court were making practical use of the great maxim which has made and unmade more empires and upset more applecarts than any other: Language was given to Man, to the end that he might conceal his thoughts! It was cryptic.

Through *The Book of Ballymote* by the *Grammar of Cenfaela the Learned* we arrive at the unrevised *Uraicept Na N-Eigeas* composed in the reign of Conchobhar Mac Nessa at the beginning of the first century. Treating of the



Ogham we discover there—" *Caide loc ocus aimsir ocus persa ocus fat airic in Ogaim? Persa do Ogma mac Elatain, dearbraithar do Bres, ar Bres ocus Ogma ocus Delb tri mic Elatain.*" Which being interpreted is, "What is the place, period, person, and the cause which gave origin to the Ogham? The person was Ogma son of Elatan, brother of Breas, for Breas and Ogma and Dealbh were three sons of Elatan." This passage—a trifle contracted here—is a classical allusion. It is still more condensed by Dr. Macalister who simply states that Ogham was put together by Ogma Sun-face, son of Bres, son of Elada; and that this conducts us into august company. "There is no shadow of doubt," he continues, "that Ogma was originally a god." "It scarcely admits of doubt that Ogma is to be equated with Ogmios, the god of eloquence." Here we clearly see the difference between knowing and not knowing. But on pages 30 and 31 there is an excellent illustration of how pure conjecture glides into irrefutable fact. Here it is (p. 30): "The literature of the Ogham language, as a whole, is lost for ever. But we possess a poetical composition *which may very well be* (italics mine) one of its hymns." Next page: "What we have is of course only a translation out of the druidic 'Ogham' speech. That which may be now is! It is infinitely more satisfying to be told that the language of the traditional Druidic literature was Old Goidelic which bears much the same relation to the earliest Irish of the MSS. as Latin does to mediaeval Italian or French."

Prof. Macalister's story of O'Gibellan (Ob. 1328) who, it was alleged, spoke Ogham is extremely good. Its suggestion of Lamartine and the Phoenician speaker is even better.

There is no space here to notice at any length what our learned author has written on the languages called Hisperic and Bog-Latin. About *Hisperica Famina* he deplores the sudden death of one Henry Bradshaw which prevented posterity from enjoying the fruits of his labours on that forbidding subject. We are told that its style resembles in some degree certain parodies of *Euphues*. There will be found just here a piece of delicious writing of a most timely kind containing various blistering comments on a school of writers of our own day.

I found the Bog-Latin vocabulary given on pages 94-115 inclusive most entertaining and instructive. He dates it some time in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Stokes suggested that some of these hard words may be of Pictish origin. Dr. Macalister with his ever-ready wit states that "to try to explain anything on earth with the help of Pictish is as futile as to try to illuminate crepuscular shadows by means of the blackness of Tartarus." No help from Pictish!

In approaching Shelta we are being introduced to real low life—the world of tinkers and Gypsies and knife-grinders and tramps and hooligans of every sort. Had our author been in search of a sub-title for this book he might have inscribed on it: "getting to be too blown." We meet it as a recurring decimal all the way through. The scissors-grinder who conversed with Leland outside Bath said that his friends were abandoning Romani because it was getting "to be too blown." The correct tongue for the likes of him they call *Shelter*. Some time later near Philadelphia he met another tramp who claimed to speak Shelta. There is no doubt, we are told, that this language is a hereditary possession of the Irish tinkers, handed down from father to son. Sampson and Leland are to be found in the vilest purlieus of Liverpool questing after Shelta—a language

which the first named thought no gentleman should be asked to collect. In a doss-house he made acquaintance with John Barlow from whom he really learned the mysteries of Shelta.

Specimens in plenty of this lingo are furnished forth. The English translations show here and there that it is very far from respectable. Indeed one proverb which may not be rendered in current speech is decently put down in Latin. Several others have no printed translation of any kind. They are simply called [Insults]. Once again I assert that this is a learned book, humorous, and to certain intelligences as fascinatingly interesting as it is scholarly.

SAMUEL B. CROOKS.

THE MEDIEVAL LATIN AND ROMANCE LYRIC TO A.D. 1300. By F. Brittain, pp. xiv. + 274. Cambridge University Press. 1937. 15s. net.

"Here for the first time the two parallel literatures of the Middle Ages, the Latin and the vernacular, may be studied side by side." So says the publisher's note on the jacket. The "critical survey of the Medieval Latin and the various branches of Romance Lyric" which occupies pp. 1-61 is useful, although dangerously weak on the metrical side.

I will not venture to criticize Mr. Brittain's explanation of the metres of Commodian (pp. 2-3). I do not know if Josef Martin's new edition of Commodian has appeared, and until I am able to consult it, I prefer to leave Commodian alone. But Mr. Brittain is not clear as to the process by which quantitative metres developed into accentual metres. It may be true (p. 8), accidentally, owing to the accentual pattern of the later iambic dimeter due to its undetermined thesis, that in the Ambrosian stanza "metrical ictus and word-accent tend to fall more and more on the same syllable." But this is, most emphatically, not true of any other type of line. To suppose that it is, is to misunderstand the process completely and to be guilty of the worst possible error. The accentual derivatives of the Sapphic, the catalectic iambic trimeter, the brachy-catalectic dactylic tetrameter, the phalaeceus, the catalectic minor asclepiad, the alcaic—most of them favourite medieval metres, are sufficient proof. But Mr. Brittain has not seen fit to give examples of any of these!

As an early specimen of the Alba, the *Phoebe claro*... (Poet. Lat. Aevi Carol. III 703) might have been given, especially as it is written in the metre of some of the earliest Provençal poems, but Mr. Brittain has no reference to this metre nor any poem written in it, either in Latin or Provençal. Dr. Hans Spanke in his *Beziehungen zwischen Romanischer und Mittellateinischer Lyrik*, (Berlin 1936), which Mr. Brittain includes (unread?) in his Bibliography, shows that the 3, 7, 11, line of William IX of Aquitaine,

Companho, farai un vers tot convinen . . .

is imitated from the Latin type

Promat chorus hodie, o contio . . . .

I will not quarrel, however, with Mr. Brittain's selection. Every anthologist makes his own choice. I am glad to find *A Solis ortu usque ad occidua* (accentual

iambic trimeters), but I would have liked a better selection from William IX of Aquitaine and more of Abelard (the greatest poet of his time).

I am glad also to see the *Huc usque, me miseram*.

The Bibliography should have included a reference to the work of Schlicher, Verrier, Beeson, and above all to Ph. Aug. Becker, the best of medieval metrists after W. Meyer and an authority on the medieval lyric. No medievalist can afford to neglect *Die Anfänge des Romanischen Verskunst* (Jena 1932) and *Vom Christlichen Hymnus zum Minnesang* (Köln 1932). Nicolau's work is included in the Bibliography. The most untrustworthy Kawczynski might have been omitted, or included with a caution.

Among other Latin poems that I miss are *Quis est hic qui pulsat ad ostium* (eleventh century), probably by St. Peter Damian, and the *Corona Virginum* of Sigebert of Gembloux (in quantitative alcaics).

The book will be most useful and instructive, particularly as it includes Spanish, Galician, Portuguese and Italian. I welcome Mr. Brittain to the ranks of medievalists.

T. B. RUDMOSE-BROWN.

THE CRUSADE, THE WORLD'S DEBATE. By Hilaire Belloc. London: Cassell & Co. 1937. Pp. 314. 12s. 6d. net.

If we make due allowance for Mr. Belloc's prejudices and whims, this book is, without doubt, an excellent and most readable account of the Crusades up till the fall of Jerusalem in 1187. It does not, of course, profess to be exhaustive like Röhrich's immense tome or Grousset's three enormous volumes, and it is specifically designed to prove a thesis (as we might expect)—the thesis that the failure to occupy Damascus was the inherent weakness of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Mr. Belloc is probably right in this contention, and he certainly makes an unanswerable case. He is perhaps unjust to Baldwin I and Baldwin II, and he certainly overrates the share of Urban II and underrates—or rather ignores—the share of the Monks of Cluny before the time of the great Clunisian Pope. A reference to Hatem's work *Les Poèmes épiques des Croisades* (1937) will correct this injustice.

Mr. Belloc follows the chroniclers and almost all the historians in making Baldwin II the cousin of Baldwin I. There is no justification for supposing this relationship. The "cousinship" comes from the legend of the "Chevalier au Cygne" in which indeed they were cousins—a legend that arose in Syria almost immediately after the death of Godfrey. William of Tyr, the contemporary historian of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, knew this story and alas! although he discredited the supernatural elements, accepted, on no ground that can be discovered, the consanguinity. Baldwin II was the son of Count Hugues II of Rethel and of Mélisende de Montlhéry and was therefore the first cousin of Jocelin I of Edessa, but was not related, except through common descent from Charlemagne, to Baldwin I and Godfrey of Bouillon. Mr. Belloc may be excused for an error which he shares with Grousset and almost every one else. But he has no excuse for calling either the House of Boulogne or the House of Rethel cadet branches of the House of Flanders (p. 57, p. 191, p. 198). They were not. It is a mistake to suppose that "magnus" applied to Hugues of



Vermandois (p. 59) means "great"; it is an inaccurate Latin rendering of "mainsné" or "younger." It is true that Raymond IV was Count of Toulouse and Marquis of Provence (p. 58), but he was not Count of Provence. Mr. Belloc should distinguish the County from the Marquisate of Provence.

It is most disquieting to note that Mr. Belloc—a devout Catholic—should refer to the adulterous union of the mother of Foulques V of Anjou (and I of Jerusalem) with the King of France as a "marriage" (p. 200). Philip's offspring by Bertrade de Montfort, while still wife of Foulques IV, were counted bastards and incapable of succession to the throne. It is rather drastic to say that in 1144 "the vernacular languages" had not yet "appeared as literature" (p. 240). After all, the *Song of Roland* is not negligible as literature, and Guillaume IX of Aquitaine is not a lyricist without merit.

Mr. Belloc states (p. 191) that from Jocelin de Courtenay's "accession of wealth and power" as Count of Edessa "springs the great part played by the Courtenays thenceforward in the story of Western Europe, and even of England." This is incorrect. It is perhaps true that the Courtenay Earls of Devon and their offshoots are descended from Jocelin I of Edessa through his son Renaud. But the rest of the Courtenays who distinguished themselves in history are descended from Jocelin's brother Miles through his grand-daughter Elizabeth who married Pierre de France, son of Louis le Gros, and founded the Royal branch of Courtenay. From that marriage, not from any lordship of Edessa, spring the Courtenay Emperors of Constantinople—Pierre, Robert, Baudouin II, Philippe I (titular), and the Empress (titular) Catherine who married into the House of Valois and begot other titular Emperors. From Pierre de France and Elizabeth also descend, in one way or another, Isabeau, wife of King John of England, a Queen of Hungary, an Empress of Nicaea, a Princess of Achaia, Marguerite, wife of Edward Balliol, King of Scotland, and Irene, wife of Léon I and Léon II of Armenia. But Edessa had nothing to do with all this line.

Mr. Belloc shows himself too apt to make a hero of that picturesque and heroic scoundrel Renaud de Chatillon who, according to Grousset, was responsible for the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Renaud was the supreme example in the Orient of his day of the "féodalité pillarde, sanguinaire et anarchique." Long before, as Prince of Antioch (1153) he had inflicted a brutal indignity on the Patriarch of Antioch (il le fit fouetter jusqu'au sang, après quoi on lui enduisit la tête et les plaies de miel et on l'exposa, ligoté et nu, aux piqures des mouches et des guêpes, sous le soleil brûlant de l'été syrien). "Grousset is not wrong in calling Renaud "une bête féroce." Among other imbecile acts of violence Renaud quarrelled with the Byzantine Emperor and sacked Cyprus, thus working up trouble for the Crusaders. But now in 1186 and 1187 Renaud allied himself with the Bedouins to hold up the caravans on the way to and from Mecca. Early in 1187 he attacked a particularly rich caravan on the way from Cairo to Damascus. This aggression in time of peace so much angered Saladin that he determined to destroy the Kingdom. The concluding paragraphs of the book are significant: "As natives we worship ourselves, we worship the nation; or we worship . . . a particular economic arrangement believed to be the satisfaction of social justice. Those who direct us . . . have no major spiritual interest. Their major personal interest is private gain . . ." (p. 305).

T. B. RUDMOSE-BROWN.



THEY LIVED IN COUNTY DOWN. By Kathleen Fitzpatrick. Chatto & Windus.  
6s.

This is the story of five children who ran wild in the old decaying home of their ancestors. The house called Rowallen stood "in a wilderness of weeds and trees under the shadow of the Mourne Mountains," with the sea so near that on quiet days its sound came through the open windows. What a setting! and what a rich life these youngsters lived. Their ages lay between thirteen and six, and their exploits are recounted with a lovely candour. There is the brief, delightful episode of Jane's attendance at Miss Courtney's School for Young Ladies. "A lady must speak with an English accent in a voice like a silvery wave." We are not surprised when Jane's term comes to a sudden and exciting end; nothing can make a lady of her. . . . Just the sort of book that might be terribly banal, and is not. I think children will enjoy it, and grown-ups. The atmosphere of Rowallen is beautifully suggested. A preface by Walter de la Mare is an additional pleasure—but to those who like to form their own opinions I say keep to Bernard Shaw's good rule: Read the book first and the preface afterwards.

An earlier version of this book has appeared under the title of *The Weans of Rowallen*.

T. D.

THE SONNETS OF SHAKESPEARE AND SOUTHAMPTON. Edited with an Introduction by Walter Thomson. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 12s. 6d. net.

This book will have served a useful purpose if it is successful in reassuring those admirers of Shakespeare's Sonnets who have been shaken in their allegiance by the suspicion that Sonnet No. 20 is a confession of moral perversity on the part of the poet. A careful reading of the sonnet should convince the unprejudiced that this suspicion is unfounded, but, as Mr. Thomson points out, some words of the sonnet, "the master-mistress of my passion," have been so interpreted in Schmidt's Lexicon and elsewhere as to arouse natural suspicion. Mr. Thomson has no difficulty in showing that this interpretation is misleading and should be rejected, though he is less convincing when he argues that the words so unfortunately glossed by Dr. Schmidt are an allusion to the hero (Southampton!) of Shakespeare's "passion," or poem, *A Lover's Complaint*. He is happier in the explanation he offers of a line in the same sonnet, "A man in hew, all Hews in his controlling," citing in illustration an illuminating parallel from *A Lover's Complaint*. He has disposed most effectually of the 18th century commentator Tyrwhitt's suggestion that the line refers to some person named Hughes, and of the later legend, constructed by Oscar Wilde and Samuel Butler on the basis of Tyrwhitt's suggestion, of a beautiful boy actor, one Will Hughes, to whom, as "Mr. W. H.," Shakespeare's Sonnets were dedicated.

Having demolished the Will Hughes theory of the Sonnets, Mr. Thomson proceeds to put forward for consideration a not less startling theory of his own. Remarking that the Sonnets are unequal and at times inconsistent in statement or outlook, he suggests that they were written in collaboration by Shakespeare

and Southampton. The fact of dual authorship, he asserts, is revealed in *The Phoenix and Turtle* and in the dedication of the Sonnets to "Mr. W. H.," the "W" and "H" representing, in Mr. Thomson's view, the initials of the Christian names of the collaborators, William [Shakespeare] and Henry [Wriothesley]. To this theory it might be objected that some inequality was inevitable in a long series of poems, and inconsistency to be expected in so conventional a medium as the Elizabethan sonnet. The theory shares with other similar theories the defect of depending upon a number of arbitrary assumptions and of equally arbitrary interpretations of doubtful texts (e.g. Mr. Thomson's reading of Sonnet No. 125).

Relying for his evidence upon the recurrence of the motif of the interchange of hearts in both works, Mr. Thomson maintains that *The Phoenix and Turtle* is "without a doubt" a continuation of the Sonnet story (with Southampton in the rôle of the Phoenix). "If we look for it," he writes, "we can see the principle of two-in-oneness, or interchange of hearts, running from the beginning to the end of the Sonnets and *The Phoenix and Turtle*. It begins in Sonnet No. 22 with

my heart

Which in thy breast doth live as thine in me."

This may be true, but it is rash to infer that *The Phoenix and Turtle* is a continuation of the Sonnet story from the mere fact that Shakespeare made use in both works of a motif so conventional as the interchange of hearts between lovers, a motif that appears again and again, with endless variations, in the verse of 16th century Petrarchists. Shakespeare had already used it in *Venus and Adonis*:

"Give me my heart," saith she,

"O! give it me lest thy hard heart do steel it, etc.,"

verses that recall Poliziano, *Stanze*: "Rendimi il core, o cruda e dispietata . . . Rendimi il cor, chè tu non gli dai posa." Mr. Thomson does not advance one solid argument in support of his contention that *The Phoenix and Turtle* was written by Shakespeare as a tribute of admiration and affection to Southampton. The identification of the Earl with the Phoenix is a scholar's phantasy.

R. P. C.

MEMORY AND OTHER POEMS. By Walter de la Mare. Constable & Co. 6s. net.  
OTHERS TO ADORN. By Oliver St. John Gogarty. Preface by W. B. Yeats.

Forewords by A. E. and Horace Reynolds. Rich and Cowan. 7s. 6d. net.

Walter de la Mare in his early work, appeared a changeling poet whose native knowledge of the unseen world permeated all his work. To him in his exile only those aspects of earthly beauty which at best seemed a dim reflection of their hidden prototypes could be his subjects. In one of his best known early poems, he cries:—

"They haunt me her lutes and her forests,  
No beauty on earth I see,  
But shadowed with that dream recalls  
Her loveliness to me."

But like all the banished under life-sentence, who could not otherwise exist, he has to some extent come to terms with life on this planet. In this book as in "The Fleeting," he has ceased to be what is so insultingly called an escapist, and is preoccupied with the visible beauty, the limitations and miseries of mortal existence; the tragedy of old age in particular and of the sorrowful thefts of time that make all our earthly ephemeral loveliness so doubly precious:—

"Lurks there in every rose's sweet  
A murderous whisper, Fade must I?"

No one can avoid growing old, but to the poet's overstrung apprehensions its implications seem sadder than to other people, the worst of them being that "the heart grows cold." Yet it would seem that the reverse had happened to Mr. de la Mare, for never so much as in his latest book have I been aware of his deep human sympathy for all created things, a pity begotten of wisdom and imagination. In the poem entitled "Brother and Sister" he writes in his own sensitive and exceedingly personal idiom of the universal human grief of seeing the beauty of a beloved person ravaged by the passing years:—

"Nor is this world of ours a toy  
That woe should darken when bed-time nears  
Still memory-sweet its old decoy,  
And—well, what use in tears? . . .  
So limped the brittle argument  
Yet—had I Prospero's wizardry  
She should at once have back her youth  
Whatever chanced to me."

It is significant of his latest phase that he includes in this collection a poem in sympathetic homage to that great humanist Thomas Hardy. There is no need to remind Mr. de la Mare's admirers of his technical genius. He has never been an obvious anarchist in *vers libre*, or in any of the labelled metrical innovations, but has invariably manipulated the older verse forms so that his strange lilting accentuations, and subtle changes of melody, constantly surprise and delight a sensitive ear. Every true poet is a king, measured according to the essential quality and power of his imagination, and will embrace in his kingdom everything peculiar to it. This being so, it is not surprising to note poems here, one on a pot of musk, and the other on a clavichord. The elusive faint scent of the "small meek flower," and the shadowy, elfin music of the ancient instrument are inevitably his. The sorrowful, lovely cadences of these verses defy description in the same way that music does, and the following lines by their author describe his latest book far better than any reviewer can:—

". . . for Beauty with sorrow  
Is a burden hard to be borne,  
The evening light on the foam and the swans there,  
That music, remote, forlorn."

There is nothing of the alien about Oliver St. John Gogarty. His feet are firmly planted on mortal soil, and he asks for no other world than this to inspire

his gay and gallant Muse. The rare blend of wit and lyricism in his poems recalls the later Elizabethan poets, whom he also resembles in his many-sidedness, his versatility, and tremendous zest for life in all its aspects. As poetry is only one of his expressive activities, it is not surprising that his technique is sometimes uneven, and that he relies too much on jest and gusto rather than careful polishing to take him over the difficult places; yet at his best in such poems as the classical and crystalline "Good Luck" and the drowsily beautiful "Mill at Naul," he can hold his own with any poet writing to-day. It is a volatile book, varied and in different modes; there are poems to the Irish countryside lit by a bright clarity and youthful freshness of vision; poems to lovers and poems to friends; those to Lorcan Galeran and Augustus John are vivid and robust portraits; there are elegant pastiches of the Cavalier poets such as "Begone Sweet Ghost," which would not disgrace a contemporary of Waller or Suckling. But I think it is in the mock-heroic poem "The Cock," and in his versions of the Leda and Europa myths in which he blends beauty and irony in so cunning a fashion, that his most seems to be a new and exhilaratingly original voice. He owes a great deal to a sturdy background of classical culture, and the following perfect little poem, which it is possible to quote in full, has the true Horatian poignancy and stoicism:—

"Enough! Why should a man bemoan  
A Fate that leads the natural way?  
Or think himself a worthier one  
Than those who braved it in their day?  
If only gladiators died,  
Or heroes, Death would be his pride;  
But have not little maidens gone,  
And Lesbia's sparrow—all alone?"

The prefatory note by W. B. Yeats is reprinted from the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. The foreword by A. E. is a sensitive appreciation of the man in his work, and that by Horace Reynolds an animated piece of biographical gossip.

M. G.

THE STORY OF LOWRY MAEN. By Padraic Colum. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.

"The epical material of Irish tradition," writes Mr. Colum, in a preface to this long poem, "has been exploited by modern poets, but the sagas of various historical personages have not been worked over." Many of us in those not too distant days, when great airs were about, eyed enviously those stern semi-historical tales which gloomed and glittered in O'Curry's great compilation, *MS. Materials of Irish History*. Those fragments of the little known Celtic age of sea-roving and slave raids, those brief sagas of pagan kings had not, however, completely passed through traditional imagination and lacked the inherent shapeliness of the older epic period of Cuchullin and Fionn. One is tempted to believe that respectability swept over Christian Ireland and that the immediate and shady centuries of rapine were not mentioned in polite ecclesiastical society.



Even to this day scholars have looked askance at our own "viking period." Padraic Colum therefore has certainly re-discovered our dark ages and a poet's instinct has led him to one of the finest sagas of all, that of Ugony Mor and his grandson, Lowry Maen, a story which, like the modern saga novel, involves several generations.

Mr. Colum imagines the tale as recited in some great house in the time of the ancient fairs. So he gives us effective asides:—

Unto the cromlech they have come again.  
Croftnie bids his fosterling remember  
The darkened day that brought them here before.  
The stripling looks upon the ancient stones  
As long as I look through the chimney-hole  
On that red-fired star that rides these nights.

The story, like the Elizabethan play themes, has that violence and complicated brutality which indicate a very high pitch of civilisation and it has, therefore, the dramatic contrasts of gentleness and refinement. In this saga, in fact, is to be found one of the earliest references to Irish music—the well known reference to the three strains of harp playing, the sorrow strain which made all listeners weep, the laughter strain which sent them into fits of laughter, the *suantre*, or slumber strain which lulled the fiercest breast. Here is a brief outline of the story. Ugony More, a semi-mythic figure, ruled all Ireland and his long reign was one of peace, rich harvests and marvellous weather. Internecine strife followed after his death. His son, Laery Lorc was killed by his own brother, Cõva Cael, who seized power. Laery Lorc had one son, Aillill, who was the rightful heir to the throne but he was poisoned by the usurper, Cõva. Aillill's infant son, Maen, was dumb and therefore ineligible for kingship. His life was spared and he was placed under the guardianship of Craftiné, the harper. Maen grew up to be a handsome youth and during a hurley game—a very exciting game—he suddenly spoke for the first time. Necessarily he became a fugitive. He married Miria, the daughter of a southern king who supported his cause and attempted to march on Tara. Defeated, he fled to Gaul, returned with auxiliaries and avenged the tragic fate of his father and grandfather.

Mr. Colum follows the story closely, though he condenses and modifies it. He concentrates on the events of Lowry Maen's wanderings and his romantic wooing of Miria. This poem of two thousand lines comes as a surprise, for it is Mr. Colum's first long poem and it is written in an adverse time. Mr. Colum has, perhaps for that reason, avoided the epic imagination which in other years would have been the main attraction of the theme. He sees in the saga an allegory of an age of transition, an age of change and unrest rather like our own. The story, as he develops it, shows the coming of the Iron age and the last struggle of the conservative Bronze age. The mercenaries who came back with Lowry Maen brought with them the weapons and implements of the new iron civilisation. The theme in its less martial aspects suits Mr. Colum's particular gift. And he concentrates largely on the workaday life in a period when new objects and new methods were coming into use. Avoiding the traditional Celtic imagination which as often as not turned a clay compound into a palace of quicken wood, he brings us near by simple homely touches. We see Miria and

her royal mother plucking geese to fill bolster covers. The description of Lowry himself is not that of a mythic personage but of a comely Irish lad on the run.

A lean, tall youth, and with a wedge-shaped face  
Narrow below and broad at temple-hollows,  
And with a bulge of amber-coloured hair  
Over grey, open eyes—eyes that were bright  
As shining metal or as shining water,  
And were as steady as the eyes that look out  
On far and lonely things; his mouth was shut,  
And looked as if a hand when it was soft  
Had closed it. Yet was the lad alert:  
The wild duck warying her swimming brood  
He heard, and he could follow in the half-light  
The small chicks with the hurrying water-hen.

Mr. Colum sees too the land as any small-holder might see it in bad times:—  
But where they went, the land was always turned  
Inside out like a badger hung for meat.  
They skirted lands where war was scraping out  
What people kept—as one scrapes out a pot.

Mr. Colum's method, as shown in his previous short narrative poems, is original and unobtrusive. His lines with their clear hidden delight in objects have to sink slowly into the mind before the poetic quality emerges. This is a draw-back in a long poem which requires momentum and action. For some mysterious reason Mr. Colum adds to our difficulties by keeping his blank verse in a hard narrow mould as if he felt that the Iron age could best be symbolised by cast-iron lines. There is another mystery which is hard to explain, the use of obsolete prepositions such as "unto," and other archaisms. A few strokes of the pen would eliminate these and bring out the naturalistic qualities in this courageous poem.

A.C.

POST VICTORIAN POETRY. By Herbert Palmer. Dent. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Palmer, because of his large utterance and illuminating, almost biblical, personality, is among the most individual of living English poets. He has a stern sweetness, a noble acceptance of humanity, and an unswerving faith in a very personal god. His standards, then, are the standards to which the spiritual history of England has accustomed us; and, since they are also the standards of one who specialises first in the lyrical relations which exist between man and God, we can be reasonably certain that they will have the soundness and the robust bias of long tradition, and accommodate, at the same time, his own particular contribution. Mr. Palmer belongs, really, to no school or clique. In the width and sympathy of his work he resembles Masefield. His vision and range command respect in all places; and when, to these, are added his industry and scholarship and his rare, sensitive response to words, it will be expected as a matter of course that a critical work such as *Post Victorian Poetry* is likely to prove a book of very unusual interest.

In *Post Victorian Poetry* Mr. Palmer's approach is that of the poet-critic. As a craftsman himself, he is interested more in the actual lineaments of his art than in the currents of philosophic thought that have carried it through time. This attitude, since the period he has chosen to work on falls between the 'nineties and the present day, is an advantage, for his talent for analysis and poetic divination has the freer scope. Usually a period may be summed up in the achievement of one or two or three poets of the major-minor kind, but in Georgian England, and the decades immediately before and after it, the minor poets—the poets of half a dozen lyrics—seem to have an equal right to our interest. The Muses, as a matter of fact, would appear to have been almost irreverently promiscuous; and Mr. Palmer, well aware of this, moves carefully through his time, taking his bearings from no figure in particular, taking enormous pains over a multitude of small geniuses. If he has a preference at all, it is for the diminishing sea-mark of Masfield, and it is natural that he should over-rate Masfield. They are alike in their sympathies, in their passion for air and freedom, their capacity to see poetry in the under-dog. The genius of each is peculiarly English, the shorter lyric does not contain them as it contains Baudelaire or Mallarmé, and it is very likely that the future will see them as a pair. Perhaps it is this psychic kinship that makes the chapter on Masfield one of the finest appreciations of the Poet Laureate in existence.

The range of Mr. Palmer's interest, however, may be gathered from his chapter on the Irish school. Few critics outside of Ireland and America have caught the peculiar quality of *Æ* because, in a search for profundity, they miss the many-coloured glass. *Æ* was a very intimate poet, but the intimacy of his imagination could be shared only with those to whom Celtic myth was a reality. The figures that moved through his thought are figures that evoke in Irish minds a remarkable emotional imagery, and these he used, with their associated landscapes, as the conscious counters between himself and his reader. They served his art as rhythm and image serve other poets. Mr. Palmer, while he does not exactly state this as it is stated here, comes so near to it as not to matter, and is one of the few who have approached *Æ* with any degree of insight. He is, too, one of the few critics who have perceived the real quality in Seumas O'Sullivan and Austin Clarke.

The book, as has been hinted before, is a mine of information. Mr. Palmer has raked his period with the finest of combs. Magazines and periodicals of all sorts serve their purpose in his history. He knows his literary England as one who has lived and quarrelled in it, and his writing sometimes goes up in a fire of righteous anger. With Mr. Eliot, however, he is very sane and very cold. He knows his Laforgue and Rimbaud too well to appreciate their nuptials in the creaking Elizabethan bed. Readers of *THE DUBLIN MAGAZINE* will remember the devastating analysis of *The Waste Land* which appeared some years ago, and will not be surprised to learn that Mr. Palmer, with some alterations and revisions, has included it in his book. In its present form it will prove, at the least,—if proof is necessary at this time of day,—that Mr. Eliot was a keen, if unscrupulous, student of other poets' poetry.

One of the few faults in the book, informative as it is, is Mr. Palmer's failure to emphasise fully the French influences within his period. Elroy Flecker, for instance, must have read *Inscriptions Pour Les Treize Portes de la Ville* of Henri

de Regnier. And Albert Samain, in the eighties was creating a Celtic Twilight in the middle of Paris. . . .

"J'adore l'indécis, les sons, les couleurs frêles,  
Tout ce qui tremble, ondule, et frissonne, et chatoie  
Le cheveux et les yeux, l'eau, les feuilles, la soie,  
Et la spiritualité des formes grêles; . . .

These, however, are incidental, and in the nature of a book which is a monument of industry and good sense.

SHADOW OF THE PERFECT ROSE. Collected Poems of Thos. S. Jones, Jr. New York: Farrar and Rinehart. \$2.50 net.

Many, many sonnets—mostly sonnets—are here, part of the life-work of a man, whose fount of thought was drawn from a deep, shadowy well—the Well of the Moon, beneath the Sea—the Well of the old Celtic Bards. Thomas Jones, had in his make-up, Welsh, Irish, and English, and was naturally a mystic. His portrait shows some of the attitude of the man that sings in this verse—meditative, balanced and quietly assured, and with deep-seeing vision.

His horizon was as wide as the sea and air, and he journeyed in spirit wherever he looked. We are held at once by the proof of this power, in the wide swing back into time, which we feel in his titles. He sings of the Sages and Seers of Pagan greatness, he knows the Philosopher and his Philosophy, we hear tell of many a Saint of mediaeval days. He came to Ireland, on a general pilgrimage to places he had longed to see, and in Dublin he "had the good fortune to meet Padraic and Mary Colum, whom we had known in New York. Mrs. Colum took us backstage to meet Sara Allgood, and next day to lunch with James Stephens. Afterwards we listened to the Olympian talk of Æ in Plunkett House."

In his poems there is a softness of rhythm, very characteristic of what we are told of his nature, in a short memoir by his friend John L. Foley. As his health slowly failed, so his poetry gained in richness, and he bathed his gift in the stream of the Celtic Renaissance. Many of his mystical sonnets have much of the bardic technique—here is combined his Welsh and Irish strain.

I will try to give one or two examples, and it is difficult to select from such a store—over 300 sonnets and other verse—each with a definite chant.

Three lines from *Clement of Alexandria*.

From thunderous caverns of Eleusis rolled  
The Resurrection; with the purple vine  
Of Dionysos, crimson thorns entwine.

In the Sonnet *Hugh of Saint Victor*, who hears the evening bell, but heeds not that prayers are being said

. . . . before an altar's holy mysteries.

To him all music merges in one tone  
All colors blend until each lovely hue  
A veil of pure transparent brightness weaves:  
There on the ground he kneels, but not alone,—  
Silent as star-rise or the fall of dew  
God moves among bowed grass and trembling leaves.



We have in another verse, his keen sense of the Voice in the Silence—and this is characteristic of his mind.

As quietly as dawns the day's first flush,  
As buds unfolding when the warm rains cease,  
As stars that gather in the twilight hush—  
So comes the Knowledge of Eternal Peace.

These lines are from his "Quatrains on Immortality." Space will not allow the many extracts I would like to make, but, I say to lovers of the Poets, that this collection of work, interrupted by the closing of his day at the age of 49 years, is indeed *worth while*. I think he would value those two words at their full worth—a high panegyric. A. K.

NIGHTINGALE WOOD. By Stella Gibbons. Longmans Green & Co. 8s. 6d. net.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS. PANORAMA WITH FIGURES. Osbert Sitwell. MacMillan. 8s. 6d. net.

THE MOON IS FEMININE. By Clemence Dane. Heinemann, 7s. 6d. net.

Miss Stella Gibbons might have chosen as a sub-title for her latest novel "Theme with Variations," for the plot is the old-fashioned one which invariably charmed the readers of such journals as "Home Chat" and "The Girls Own Paper," that of the beautiful, penniless shop-girl, who after many vicissitudes becomes the bride of the richest, and most handsome young man in the village. Vivid characterisation and mordant wit transfigure this hackneyed and sentimental subject, and the resulting story is her best since "Cold Comfort Farm." That delightful satire was an essentially literary work, and since then Miss Gibbons' knowledge and observation of humanity has grown richer, so that now even her minor characters carry conviction. The intelligent, untidy charm of the young girl Hetty, the passionate lover of poetry, is nicely contrasted with the materialistic insensitivity of the hard-boiled Phyl Barlow, the official fiancée of the Prince Charming hero. "Miss Barlow liked her life to be a steady movement towards pleasure. While she was having one, she was thinking about the next, and what she should wear while she had that." Running counter to the romance between the heroine, Viola, and the successful Victor, there is another affair of the heart; this time between Viola's rich cousin Tina, and her father's handsome and ambitious chauffeur. Again the author manages to be unexpected. It would have been so easy to make this young man a heartless exploiter, but although he wishes to get on in the world he is also affectionate, and being the descendant of generations of Essex peasants has a charming touch of Shakespeare's swains about him. After a suitably clandestine and poetic courtship in the woodlands, this socially uneven marriage turns out as well as most. Those who enjoy her novels may not know that Miss Gibbons is also the author of some delicately musical lyrics; and poets when they decide to be funny are generally much funnier than other people. This one is no exception. Her ingenious plot, convincing and varied cast, and her gift for spontaneous comedy make the book sheer pleasure to read.

Mr. Osbert Sitwell stages a long novel in the period lasting from some years before the Great War to some years afterwards. He possesses great observational powers, and everywhere in the book one finds a Balzacian fecundity of descriptive detail, but he is a satirist rather than a novelist; his characters are puppets, or as he prefers to call them "figures." He can do an excellent portrait of a Goya-like grotesque, such as his Miss Vera Marmaduke, the old ex-actress, but is unable to portray a living, breathing, human being. He conveys the atmosphere of a place or group of people convincingly, and in the chapter on the seasonal moods of London one notes with relief that a considerable amount of poetic feeling creeps somewhat apologetically into the writing. But the book is satire for the most part; a bombardment of scathing bitterness levelled at elderly ladies in Scarborough, at humourless intellectuals and pseudo-artists and, possibly, more worthy object of such big guns, at the hideous cant and hypocrisy of the war-mongers in 1914. An interesting but depressing social document.

Miss Clemence Dane has treated her fantastic subject in a realistically convincing manner. Her scene is Regency Brighton, her hero Mr. Henry Cope, a young man of fashion who falls in love in a quite orthodox manner, with beauty in distress, in the person of the Lady Molly Jessel; who because she is poor and sensitive, is tyrannised over and bullied by a dragon of an agéd aunt. All goes well until one day on the beach after a storm, Henry Cope finds a young seal entangled in the fishermens' nets, being cruelly persecuted by lads on the beach. Because the creature gives him what he thinks is a glance of recognition, he cuts the strangling cords from its neck, and tips the boys to let it go free. Soon after this he returns to the strand to retrieve his forgotten pen-knife and meets the seal's owner, a sort of sea-gypsy or "silkie," who in gratitude to Cope for saving the life of his "dog," gives him a strange little brown goblet. One of the most curiously exciting passages in the book is the description of the hero showing this cup to Lady Molly. She declares it to be ancient amber. "We have a case of such things at home—not perfect as this is, broken bits of cups and platters. And there are beads too, of amber and quartz. They were given to my great-grandfather by an acquaintance, a Sir Thomas Browne. Perhaps you have heard of him? I think he wrote other books as well; but I know he wrote something about crockery buried in the graves near us at home." Henry Cope tells her an extraordinary story of how one of his Suffolk ancestors in the days of King Stephen, married a "green child," who strayed through a care in a hillside on to the upper earth, and was prevented by a mountain avalanche, from regaining through the tunnel, St. Martin's Land where such strangers live. From this dubious ancestry springs his passionate desire to see more of the beautiful sea-gypsy, with whom he feels a growing blood brotherhood, and the story resolves itself into a queer emotional triangle, a duel for the heart of Henry Cope between his earthly lover and his fairy friend. These supernatural goings-on amid the fashionable frivolity of Regency Brighton, give the book an oddly fascinating atmosphere. The authenticity of detail is striking. Henry Cope and his gentle, sympathetic Molly are real people, and their conflicting reactions to an extraordinary situation completely credible. An inspired and poetic treatment of an unusual theme.

MONA GOODEN.

M

## THE SHORT STORY.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1937, ENGLISH AND AMERICAN. Edited by Edward J. O'Brien. London: Jonathan Cape. 7s. 6d. net.

Mr. O'Brien in his annual volume continues his search for organic as against inorganic fiction in the short story form. He seems to be getting it harder and harder to find what he is looking for. His early volumes, his first reports on the matter, as it were, had more body in them. But his task was one of great difficulty from the beginning. He cannot find the pulse of life in the stories which appear in the general run of magazines, and when he finds it in other places it is not usually accompanied by the best kind of presentation. Genuine substance and perfect form are rarely found together. He admits that a year which produced one great short story would be exceptional.

He measures his stories by the test of substance and he thinks of substance as something achieved by the artist in every creation of this kind, rather than something already present. Yet it seems if he could admit that substance should be already there before the writer begins, that the subject should be just right for the form in which it is to be clothed, the story would fulfil his own first condition, and, leaping into life, compel its own transformation into truth. Without this vital compulsion we can only have technique. He calls it "imaginative persuasion" and his faith in it seems to be the reason why so many of his selected short stories fail to achieve life. If the material is not there, if the story is not a story of its very self, no amount of telling can make it one.

And so it is that when Mr. O'Brien finds it so hard to find substance anywhere it is only because he finds it more and more difficult to find stories that were worth the writing. Yet he clings to his somewhat disembodied conception of substance. And so his anthology lacks that unity which would emerge from the employment of a real standard of value in its compilation. His stories look and read as if they were thrown together in desperation. They do not impress as a body of sound work.

Great short stories are immensely memorable just like great lyrics. There are not many of that quality here. But there are a few which do not immediately fade from the reader. These are the stories by Jesse Stuart, Frank O'Connor, James Hanley, J. W. Palmer, and the very little one by Penistan Chapman, which, curiously enough, is the nearest thing to a popular short story in the book.

B. M.

HELEN'S TOWER. By Harold Nicolson. (Constable, 15s.).

In a model biography, written in immaculate prose, seasoned with proper wit, Mr. Nicolson has paid a gracious tribute to the memory of his uncle, Lord Dufferin. It is a biography within an autobiography; and the method is entirely successful. The story begins in Paris when Mr. Nicolson was a child and his uncle an old man. We are then brought back to view Lord Dufferin's life from the beginning, whereupon the autobiographical element must needs leave the narrative; but one feels that the author is never far away. It can be said here that Mr. Nicolson's proustian preoccupation with his childhood may be

nauseating to some people; but it would be captious to criticise the portrait of Lord Dufferin.

Great-grandson of Sheridan, of romantic appearance, serious, charming, unimpeachable in morals and very rich, Lord Dufferin was not unduly handicapped at birth. He made full use of his advantages and as well as becoming Governor-General of Canada, Viceroy of India and British Ambassador in Paris, St. Petersburg and Rome, his career as a diplomatist was inordinately successful.

Yet we find Mr. Nicholson more than once asking [and not answering] the question: "Was Lord Dufferin a great man?" In the sense that Disraeli and Gladstone were great men he was probably not. To be born in the purple is a two-edged blessing for a man who aspires to fame: his contemporaries may be obsequious but posterity will never give him the benefit of the doubt.

It should be remembered to Lord Dufferin's credit that he was one of the few owners of estates in Ireland who sought to ameliorate the condition of their tenantry.

Mr. Nicholson has painted a sympathetic picture of this Tennysonian figure, recapturing the atmosphere of the time and enabling us to see in its most favourable light a régime that is passing away.

T. D. V. W.

THE PEAT-FIRE FLAME: FOLK-TALES AND TRADITIONS OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS. Alasdair Alpin MacGregor. Edinburgh: Moray Press. (Illus.). 12s. 6d. net.

Those who love peat-fires will enjoy this book. They find pleasure in gazing into the hurrying coils and ropes of smoke streaming up the chimney, there is enchantment taking hold of the mind that is content to watch through un-critical, un-analytical eyes, the ever-changing forms as they disappear into each other. If we would allow Nature to be as much with us as we do what we call the World, we would share in the building-up, which is her concern, and grow accordingly, instead of suffering, day by day, the callousing and fraying of this mortal outfit until all the joy, that *is* living, is a mere ghost of itself.

It is a matter of simplifying and reducing the number of "civilized" 'Wants,' if we would enjoy contentment, not of stinting ourselves in things we need. You only need to picture a quiet hour or two spent, seated in front of a modern electric heater, and you'll perceive that what is nearer to outdoors, indoors, in our primitive needs, has the more charm. Those coils of constant, un-winking red-hot iron are not a fire—there is no flame in which the elemental selves in us can live and dance.

And I think that the person who does not "believe in" the existence of a world of faery, is likely to become quite eloquent over the "advantages" of electric heaters in every room—it is significant of his world, you almost suspect that a tin-opener would be suitable first-aid to remedy his condition.

And when I think, also, that man has to be *taught* and *drilled* to disbelieve in so very much that is part of his *nake-up* as a child of Earth, the conclusion of the matter is—how far away from sanity was the education of the last century—where children were concerned, more especially. "I have never seen such things as fairies," says the teacher," and you may take it from me that they



don't exist. If I hear of any of you children saying that you think they do, I shall punish you severely."

This very fine collection of Scottish Gaelic Folk-tales, filling more than 300 pages, is a record of many wandering miles of talks with people who have seen and been visited in their homes by the people of the Sidhe, and who know of strange creatures that live in the lakes; and caves by the sea, where you may find out what the seals really are—so they say. Our author's friends tell him—and he tells us—of faery dyers, faery bag-pipes and players, faery dogs and cattle and horses—fearsome horses not friendly to men.

And there are chapters on—the Monster of Loch Awe; the Spirit-multitude; the Seal-folk in Ireland and Scotland; Bird-lore; Well lore; Bell lore; Norse and Viking tales, and almost all things in the way of a tale, with the exception of the mythological group. But the result of the author's collecting and of his skill in arranging the material is very happy and satisfying. It is a twilight and after-dark feast for the imagination; and there are many excellent photographs. When you shall have looked at the whole half-hundred of them, you shall have a very good mind-picture of the mountainy islands that remain of the greater continent they belonged to, linked with an older Ireland. The pictures are sometimes directly related—"Isle of Eigg from Isle of Muck," and, below it,—"Isle of Muck from Isle of Eigg."

So as you will see from the list of some of its contents, this book is meant for the reader who would not be bothered with faery stories. There are fine legends of raids, and of simple-looking persons who prove themselves champions with the bow-and-arrow, or the sword. And you may meet some of our old Irish Saints over there on the Islands—St. Moluag is there from Lismore, and St. Finnan, and, of course, Colum-Cille. And tales there are of the holy friars and their bells—bells which, either lost or stolen, make their own way back to the owner. Strange to find people who will believe in the possibility of these happenings, and yet persuade themselves that they have seen all of the children that Mother Nature gives birth to and finds work for, in her unseen departments. Some of us have found that there is a dream-world of the waking hours, the other half and complement of the one we inhabit in sleep, whether we like it or not.

I can promise all who will make this book the companion of an hour, that it is the makings of a congenial friend and worthy of introduction to others. Read "The Peat-fire Flame."

A. K.

THE SEVEN WHO FLED. By Frederick Prokosch. (Chatto & Windus, 8s. 6d.).  
THE BLACK VIRGIN. By Mary Borden. (Heinemann, 7s. 6d.).

The naturalistic novel, even at its best, has never the rich excitement, the sense of breadth and dimension, which novels moving out to the external realities through symbolism manage in some strange way to possess. Mr. Prokosch is a natural poet. Behind *The Seven Who Fled* is the exciting dimension, Destiny, Nemesis—call it what you will, and from this the characters move into the final full shape which only people living at their limits seem to take on before death.

Seven European nationals are stranded in a small city in southern Asia. Some stay there, some leave legitimately, some break away—out of gaol. All in their separate ways through travel, struggle, plague, hunger, lust or drugs,

are fashioned at the last into the shapes that their natures have destined for them. A separate section is given to each character or to a pair of characters ; and in each section is a dream-lapse wherein the character lives over again the influences and events which have moulded it to date. It is all done with an accurate living language and a care for the pictorial which is extraordinarily successful. Asia emerges like some huge mosaic, something out of dream, half life and half vision. A beautiful and horrible book.

*The Black Virgin* is another story. Here is the naturalistic novel, neat and up-to-date, a social document confined to time and place, very accurate in character drawing and in natural happening but utterly devoid of the imaginative leap that brings up new landscapes to the mind. There is in this type of story no surprise. The land is mapped, the bungalows a-building, time is the time of the time-tables.

The author of *The Black Virgin* is efficient. Her women characters indulge in the kind of pleasure that husbands usually object to when their social positions are on a lower plane and their own morals—perhaps of necessity—on a plane somewhat higher. Miss Borden makes them pleasant, not too idle, and not too neurotic—and that is something in these hard times.

D. F.

THE MOTH AND THE STAR. By J. H. Pollock. Talbot Press. 7s. 6d.

IN THESE QUIET STREETS. By Robert Westerby. Arthur Barker. 7s. 6d.

It is always very difficult to write a successful book about a genius ; the effort to create a being who is larger than life results too frequently in the production of something rather less. When the genius is an historical character of whom we already know a certain amount, the difficulty is greater. If both the genius and the character happen to be Shelley, the difficulty is almost insuperable.

Mr. Pollock set bravely about his task but Amelia Curran, who figures more prominently in the story than the poet, is far more convincing.

Keats, Curran, Hudson and Newman are other celebrated people who appear in the story. The whole book is written with great care and the author has sought to recreate the atmosphere of the period.

Mr. Westerby is a more entertaining writer. His story is unpretentious and he asks us to move in less distinguished company. "In These Quiet Streets" is a novel which having taken it up one is reluctant to put down until it is finished. The author has a sense of character and is an acute observer. This book is highly recommended.

T. d. V. W.

THE YOUNGEST DISCIPLE. By Edward Thompson. Faber & Faber. 7s. 6d.

There is something in this book that stays with one ; a spirit of reverence, coupled with the realism of simple people, fills every line. The story is of a herdboy, called Panchkori, who lives in Northern India, half a millenium before the birth of Christ. To this boy, plunged in misery, comes Buddha, bringing consolation and strength. Panchkori becomes *The Youngest Disciple*. In company with his master and other disciples he then wanders through villages and open countryside, spreading the doctrine. For a time he leaves the Assembly : we hear of his brief love, his repentance and return, his contacts with the greatly

varying characters among the disciples. By means of such a tale Mr. Edward Thompson has given a beautiful interpretation of the Buddhist religion.

T. D.

OFFENBACH AND THE PARIS OF HIS TIME. By S. Kracauer. Constable. 18s.  
 "LA VIE PARISIENNE": A Tribute to OFFENBACH. By Sacheverell Sitwell.  
 Faber and Faber. 3s. 6d.

Paris of the mid-nineteenth century, Paris of the Second Empire, of the 1867 Exhibition, the Paris of Offenbach. And what a Paris it was!—the thronged Bois and the boulevards, the din of the Café Tortoni and the crush and gossip of the salons. Offenbach set it all to music and Paris went to see and hear itself in "La Vie Parisienne."

Herr Kracauer uses a large canvas for his treatment of the scene, a canvas crowded with princes and personages, carriages and crinolines, while Mr. Sitwell works Offenbach into a fantasy which has all the colour and imagery of a Jack Yeats' picture. And colour, of course, suits Offenbach, for he was gay and light-hearted—this "Mozart of the Champs-Élysées"—he knew a lot of tricks, and he ranted and strutted across his stage until the last sad months of "Les Contes d'Hoffmann" when the curtain could remain up no longer. But it was fashionable to rant and strut, fashionable to glitter, in the Paris of his time, and what a fantastic period it was these two authors leave us in no doubt.

ARTHUR DUFF.

FAITHFUL STRANGER AND OTHER STORIES. By Sheila Kaye-Smith. Cassell.  
 7s. 6d.

Some of these stories strike one as having been written for no other purpose than that it is Miss Kaye-Smith's job to write. I sighed, when reading, for that golden, impossible rule forbidding the appearance in print of any work not springing from a deep emotion, from wonder, from reverence, from joy. Yet one, at least, of these stories does hold wonder—*A Wedding Morn.* The others make clear, crisp reading, and the re-appearance of Joanna Godden will doubtless bring delight to many people.

T. D.

PIERS PLOWMAN: An Interpretation of the A-text. By T. P. Dunning, C.M., M.A. Talbot Press. 8s. 6d. net.

To give some idea of the scope of this scholarly work it is necessary to remind the reader that *Piers Plowman* has come down to us in three texts, and that the relationship between these texts has been long in controversy. Scholars were divided in their opinions on this and other questions raised by the poem, and no final answers to these appeared to be possible in the absence of critical editions of the several texts. In this impasse Dr. Dunning was happily inspired to test the findings of textual scholarship by an investigation of the thought of the poem, and of its development in Texts A and B. The interpretation of the poem in the light of the ideals and opinions of the period was obviously a work of immense labour, which fortunately has been rewarded by the important results obtained. It is only possible to indicate briefly some of the conclusions at which Dr. Dunning has arrived. He holds strongly that the *Visio* and the



*Vita* are distinct poems, though by the same author; and he is inclined, "while refraining from taking a definite stand on the question," to favour the theory of the divided authorship of Texts A and B. The commentary on the original text (Text A) is a contribution to scholarship of the highest value. It supplies the cultural background to the poet's thought, and reveals the *Visio* as being "a conscious literary work, carefully planned and artistically executed," and not, as was formerly thought, a loosely-connected series of visions. As interpreted by Dr. Dunning, it is "essentially an allegory of the human life of man, here on earth," in a setting "that places the world of human affairs in relation to Eternity."

HERMATHENA. Nos. 50 and 51. Hodges. 6s. each.

These two numbers of *Hermathena*, which is still going strong after more than sixty years' existence, contain a good deal of interesting matter. Much of it is, as must be expected, Don-nish, but there are bright gleams of human feeling, and, as an occasional review for intelligent intellects, it must be in the front rank. Mr. Tate in number 50 discusses Aristotle's *Poetics*, with particular reference to katharsis and "the Black Bile," whereas in the following number Professor Trench vigorously declines to admit any Black Bile into the argument. One is glad to see that Mr. David Grene, as evidenced by his paper on the comic technique of Aristophanes, is interested in Aristophanes as literature and not merely as Greek. Classics and philosophy and linguistics are well represented, and of particular Irish interest are papers by Mr. Montgomery Hitchcock on the Latin writings of St. Patrick and Mr. Esposito on Latin learning and literature in mediaeval Ireland. Concessions to modernism are made with Mr. Leventhal's paper on Colloquial Colour in Contemporary French Literature, and a poetical section of *Kottabistae*, not up to the old level, it must be said, but nevertheless something.

P. S. O'H.

#### IRISH HISTORICAL STUDIES.

The appearance of a journal expressly devoted to Irish historical studies is an event of prime importance in the annals of Irish learning, and this volume I of "Irish Historical Studies" will therefore be welcomed and wished well and its future be anxiously watched.

It is well launched, well printed, handsomely turned out, and edited with care and discretion. The Rev. Dr. O'Doherty's article on "The Song of Dermot and the Earl" has the first, and deserves the pride of, place and is a masterly study of sources for the Anglo-Norman invasion. While all the papers are good, the historical revision as to the birth-date of the famous Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, is the most arresting, for it shows convincingly that this famous patriotic leader was born about 1550, so that the picture of him as already a man of over sixty when he submitted to Mountjoy or seventy-six when he died in Rome must be revised.

The bibliographical material seems to the present reviewer especially commendable, for this is an aspect of Irish history-writing which needs primary attention. But when we turn to the reviews, we must express the hope that the editors will resist the easy temptation, just because they receive copies, of



reviewing books, important or otherwise, which do not come within the scope of *Irish historical studies* (the italics are ours). We do not consider "The Secret Languages of Ireland" as within this scope, nor "The Living Torch," nor "A History of Australia," and think that the editors' valuable space should be most jealously reserved for Irish purposes. E. C.

("Irish Historical Studies," Vol. I., No. 1, March, 1938. The joint journal of The Irish Historical Society and the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies. Hodges, Figgis and Co. 5s. 6d.).

### '98 LEAFLETS

We have been privileged to receive from Mr. J. H. Fowler of St. Giles Book Shop, Bloomsbury, London, W.C.2., three numbers of a series of '98 Leaflets which he proposes to issue from time to time. They look simple enough but there is evidence of a great deal of thought and research in their composition, how many Irish book collectors, for example, have ever seen the memorial cards of William Orr or the family coat of arms? These, with the memorable poem by Dr. Drennan are embodied in Number 1. The second deals with the O'Byrne's, and particularly with Billy Byrne of Ballymanus fame, it includes the well-known ballad by Jacky Aspel and is illustrated by an authentic portrait, which is still in the possession of members of the Byrne family.

Number 3 is devoted to Father James O'Coigly and here is shown a picture of the memorial erected to his memory by some exiled brethren at a later date. These little leaflets are bound to be much sought after by collectors, but strange to relate, no price is mentioned, probably the compiler did not wish to deface them with price marks, but one can readily understand that they cost something to produce in view of the blocks used. So far only three have been issued but the series is very interesting and full of promise. We offer our compliments to Mr. Fowler on his enterprise and on the happy thought which inspired it, would that many booksellers would do something similar. B.

ALFRED THE GREAT. Ralph Gustafson. (Michael Joseph. 5s.).

This is a verse play in three acts. The verse is, for the most part, blank. The author does not stand any nonsense: Alfred is allowed ale, but no cakes. This may puzzle light-minded readers who have not seen the warning on the dust cover which says:—"Here the reader will find no allusion to the mythical burnt cakes": heartening news, no doubt, to your genuine seeker after truth, but I felt guilty immediately and nervous for quite a long time afterwards.

If this play is ever performed the copious stage directions in the text should prove useful. T. d. V. W.

THE HOUSE IN THE DUNES. Maxence Van Der Meersch. (Constable 7s. 6d.).  
ON BORROWED TIME. Lawrence Edward Watkin. (Lovat Dickson, 7s. 6d.).

The first of these novels is a translation. The author is Flemish. Some of his earlier books have already appeared in English. It exhibits more conscious literary effort than the average "thriller." Life has been infused into the

characters and their behaviour is governed by comprehensible motives : so often in this type of story the only reason for the action of the characters is the author's urgent necessity for a plot. The novel relates the adventures of tobacco smugglers on the Franco-Belgian border and is long enough to engage the reader's attention from Dublin to (approximately) Mullingar, Athlone, Moate or Kilbeggan.

*On Borrowed Time* is whimsy, seasoned with humour of the dog and lamp-post variety at the beginning, and pathos at the end. T. de V. W.

CASTLE BRAN. By K. F. Tegart. Faber & Faber. 7s. 6d.

This is an Anglo-Irish novel of the type with which Kickham and Lover have made us familiar. The story is told with a swing, the fun is fast and furious.

The style however is so masterful and easy that there is no strain on the readers. The characters are all alive and recognisable ; altogether one of the pleasantest books of its kind that has appeared for sometime.

Of course two middle-aged ladies drinking the King's health every evening—in ginger wine—at a house in the West of Ireland in this generation is an anachronism to put it mildly, even if one of them does murmur a little defiantly into her glass "And God Bless Ireland."

This, however, and more could be forgiven for the peerless Pauline who took being made love to by the artist nephew from London, having her portrait painted, and waiting at table—as learned in service at Galway—under its shadow in Castle Bran, all in her stride to keep Doolan the grocer quiet about his bill.

Another exhilarating episode was the drive from the railway station in pouring rain of Miss Chassie and Mr. Herring, a London antiquarian, in a rattling motor. Hanlon's foot was on the "exhilarator" and he also saw to it that his passengers were fortified with whiskey at intervals.

The book is full of astonishing events, the story ending well for everyone—freedom for the artist, money and matrimony for the vagabond uncle, and for Eleanor, a continuation of her rule and hospitality at Kildoran House.

SABU, THE ELEPHANT BOY. By Frances Flaherty and Ursula Leacock. 1937. Dent & Sons, Ltd. 5s.

HERON'S ISLAND. By G. Dewi Roberts. Dent & Sons, Ltd. 1937. 5s.

The first is the story of the making of a film of the little Indian boy, Sabu, and of his elephant, Irawatha, based on *Toomai of the Elephants* in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*.

Those who remember Mr. Robert Flaherty's Irish film *Man of Aran* will see the same photographic artistry and skill in all the forty-six illustrations in photogravure which are taken from the new film *Elephant Boy*. For that alone the book is worth while ; the story of Sabu, the little orphan-boy who loved elephants and how he came to play the part of Toomai in the film, will be a thriller for the children for whom the book is written.

In the telling of the story the authors adopted a style which in their effort to get "down" to the readers touches often on banality. This too obvious getting "down" to the reader is out of date. It is not a difficulty that modern



writers for children seem to have; they avoid it by a skilful use of a simple classical style. The photography amply compensates for anything that may be found wanting in the story.

For the child who applies to stories the criterion "Is it true?" *Sabu, the Elephant Boy*, is just the thing, but the same child will turn to the improbable *real* world of *Heron's Island* with the equal delight and appreciation. This beautifully produced book with its delicate and revealing illustrations will be a welcome gift for the child book-lover. Although it is a sequel it is self-contained and complete in itself. It is the story of the family who are forced to leave *The House that was Forgotten* and to go to live on a small island inhabited by puffins; of their many adventures with visitors to the island, schoolboys, tourists; and finally, their capture for Bilboes Circus where, with other creatures of the wild, lions, tigers, leopards, panthers and bears, they provide a spectacle till at last they escape from distasteful captivity to freedom.

E. MACC.

KEEP FIT AND CHEERFUL. John F. Lucy. Dublin: Talbot Press. 1s. net.

PERSONALITY SURVIVES DEATH. Lady Barrett. London: Longman's, Green. 7s. 6d. net.

THROUGH THE WINDOW. J. H. Wood. Melbourne: Fraser and Jenkinson.

*Keep Fit and Cheerful* is consistent in its structure and contents with the spirit of its title—quite a small book, you can carry it about with you, and each sentence is short and concise and cheerful. It has illustrations to represent to you the general contour of your head, body and limbs, in some of the exercises—and, believe me, they are the very shorthand of poise and pose. One of them looks like the sign "&", balanced on a side-wise "W," and it contains the essence of the gymnastic. You need no apparatus, and your age is never a bar to benefit from Capt. Lucy's course, and so complete its range, that it is also a system of Memory-training. Altogether a worth-while purchase, a good investment, and it is distinctly a home-product—from Glenageary, Co. Dublin.

*Personality Survives Death*, by Lady Barrett, is a record of trance sittings, in which the late Sir William Barrett is purported to be the communicator.

*Through the Window*, by J. H. Wood, comes from Melbourne, and is an amazing volume—the collected speeches, essays and criticisms of a writer possessed of an energy of expression that tends to leave the reader breathless. Perhaps this is partly the result of compressing so many fields of combat into one volume. He is a fearless critic, un-influenced by the opinions of authority—refreshing to meet, but most exhausting to keep company with. It is truly to sit at an open Window, with the doors of the room also open, and a buffeting gale tearing over and through you. There are many pages reviewing and criticizing—Nietzsche, Marx, D. H. Lawrence, Major Douglas and his social credit doctrines—while there is a most extensive quotation from Joyce's "Ulysses," followed by J. H. W.'s criticism. In fact, the range of subjects, and the amount of dissection each is subjected to, compel this reviewer to award it a place among the encyclopaedias in a politician's library.

A. K.